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**The Barbarian Invasions of Italy**

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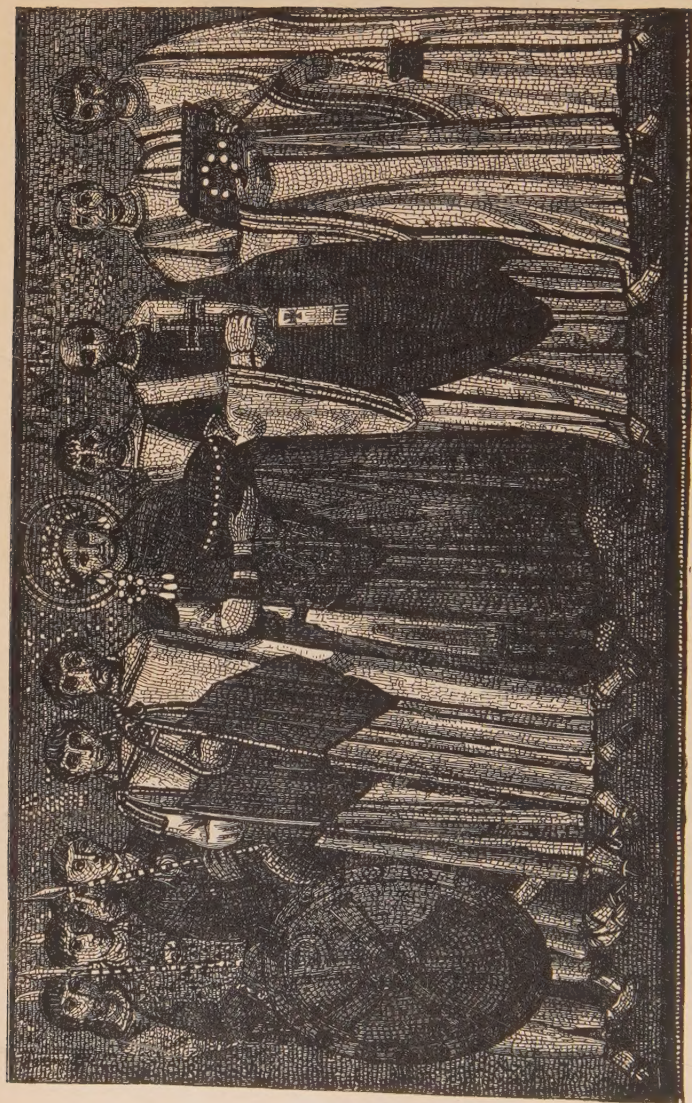
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# Barbarian Invasions of Italy

BY  
PASQUALE VILLARI

TRANSLATED BY  
LINDA VILLARI

WITH 2 ILLUSTRATIONS

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## PREFACE



THE purpose that impelled me to write this book is a very modest one, but extremely difficult to fulfil. Whether I have succeeded or failed the reader must decide. But I should like to explain what induced me to make the attempt.

It is an undeniable fact that since the kingdom of Italy has been established we have made much progress in historical research. This is proved by the great number of Historical Archives published in every part of the country ; by the Commissions and Societies for the study of Italian history which have sprung into existence on all sides ; by the enormous mass of documents daily brought to light ; by the notable advance made in paleography, diplomatics, classic and neo-Latin philology, the history of jurisprudence, and generally in historic method and research. Nevertheless books supplying narratives of past events in a simple, easy, readable style, such as abounded formerly in Italy, and served as models to other countries, are becoming increasingly scarce here. Yet, undeniably, the true object of ransacking the national archives is to assist the production of narratives suited for the general

mass of readers.<sup>1</sup> As it is, we leap from scholastic books read at school, and quickly thrown aside, to learned works, which are only suited to professional scholars, or specialists, as we call them nowadays.

It is easy to understand what serious harm this must cause to our literature and our standard of culture, especially when it is remembered that history in general, and the history of Italy in particular, should be not only a means of instruction, but likewise of national education, by serving as a real factor in the formation of the moral and political character of our country. Cesare Balbo, who was always inspired by lofty patriotism, deplored throughout his life the absence of any popular history of Italy that all might read with pleasure and profit. He made many attempts to write a history of this kind, but was always daunted by the numerous difficulties in the way. At the present time when so many new documents have been published, so many new and subtle controversies started, the difficulties of the task are even greater than before. Some, indeed, are inherent to the nature of the subject; but others, it must be confessed, are the consequence of our method of treating it and of the direction given to our studies. In any case it is a very arduous task to make a plain and lucid narrative of the history of a land that was formerly divided into so many separate states, every one of which had its own special character and special vicissitudes. We find in the south a feudal kingdom; in Central Italy the States of the Church, with a government differing from every other, and a history closely connected with that of all Europe; while towards the north we have an endless string of communes and petty autocracies. How and where shall we find a clue to guide author and reader through the

<sup>1</sup> Professor Romano, of the University of Pavia, has also insisted, in a recent discourse, on the conditions of historical study in Italy.

labyrinth? Of course these difficulties are not confined to Italy; Germany, too, has been always divided and subdivided. Nor would they be insuperable obstacles had we not greatly strengthened them by faults of our own, and in many different ways. In all our schools, as in all our historical publications, we are now almost exclusively concerned with the history of Italy. The production of any Italian work on the history of the Reformation, of the French Revolution, of Germany, England, Spain, or foreign nations in general, has become almost impossible. Yet our own history is so closely bound up with that of all Europe, that neither can be properly comprehended without studying the other. In fact, who could understand mediæval Italian history without studying the Germany of the Middle Ages, or investigate the primary origins of our period of revival without devoting attention to the French Revolution? Who, again, could arrive at a clear conception of the Counter-Reformation in Italy without previous understanding of Luther's Reformation? Accordingly, while our tendency towards an exclusive and unilateral erudition leads us to investigate particular problems of Italian history with ever-increasing zeal, it likewise adds to the difficulty of comprehending the general character of our country or justly estimating our share in the civilisation of the world. Thus we have sometimes the humiliation of seeing foreigners produce better books than we Italians can write on ancient, mediæval, or modern Italy; and our rising generation has to learn the history of its own land from foreign sources. Unfortunately, too, in spite of great learning and good method, such works are sometimes written in a hostile key; their authors being naturally moved by patriotism to extol their own country at Italy's expense. Hence inexact notions and judgments are diffused even among ourselves on the political and moral character of



Italians, and on the intrinsic value of our literature and civilisation, which have a really bad effect upon us by lowering our estimate of our own people.

Another and no slight obstacle to the production of an impartial as well as a patriotic and popular national history is caused by the present position of Italy with regard to the Church. Some of our writers are Guelph, others Ghibelline: the former always seek to praise the Popes, and justify all their deeds; while the latter, on the contrary, would always blame them, and try to throw into the shade the undeniably great part played by them in our history.

An additional obstacle is the present neglect among us of religious studies, of the history of theology or Christianity. Yet without investigating these subjects how can it be possible to appreciate the history of a people that founded the Catholic Church, of a people whose religious life was formerly so intense, and so closely connected with its political, literary, artistic, and civil life?

Reflecting on all this, it occurred to me that a series of volumes treating separately and in a popular style of the different periods of Italian history, under all its different aspects, and also comprising the history of other civilised nations, would be decidedly useful to our country. Historical series of this kind are now to be found in all parts of Europe and America; ought we not then to have one such collection at least? Accordingly I suggested the idea to that excellent publisher, Signor Hoepli, of Milan, who received it favourably, and undertook to carry it out.

Two volumes of the series have already appeared. The first is a new edition, revised and corrected, of Count Balzani's well-known work on the Italian Chronicles. The second is a history of the Liberation of Italy, by Professor Orsi, of Venice. Three other

volumes will appear before long. One of them, almost completed, on geographical discoveries, is by Professor Errera, of Turin. Professor Salvemini, of Florence, and Professor Brizzolara, of Reggio, treat of the history of Modern Europe. Other volumes are in course of preparation.

Desiring to aid in the general undertaking to the best of my ability, I now contribute a first volume of Italian history, devoted to the period of the Barbarian Invasions. It is neither a learned nor a scholastic book, nor is it a philosophic study of universal history, such as Bryce's "Holy Roman Empire," or Quinet's "Italian Revolutions." I merely narrate events in chronological and logical order, without commenting or descanting on them, doing my best to avoid dryness. Naturally I have consulted many recent works, such as those of Bury, Malfatti, Bertolini, Dahn, Mühlbacher, Hartmann,<sup>1</sup> and, above all, of Hodgkin. I have also recurred to certain elder authorities, such as Gibbon, Tillemont, and Muratori, who never grows old; nor have I forgotten to refer to original documents. But quotations have been omitted as a rule, save in very exceptional cases. I began with the idea that a small volume devoted to a single period of Italian history before the land had been divided and subdivided would be comparatively easy to write; but I speedily discovered that, for me, at least, it was a very difficult task. Nevertheless I have been favoured with much precious aid and advice from two learned colleagues and dear friends, Professor Achille Coen, and Professor Alberto Del Vecchio, and gladly seize this opportunity of publicly expressing my deepest gratitude to them. My thanks are also due to the excellent Professor Luiso for his kind assistance in the correction of proofs.

<sup>1</sup> I have not yet seen the newly published vol. ii. of Hartmann's "History of Italy."

Should these early volumes of the series be favourably received, should the public prove indulgent to the unavoidable defects of an undertaking that is almost a novelty in this land, should we continue to secure the co-operation of learned men, we believe that the series will be an aid to general culture and greatly help to prepare the way for the complete popular history of Italy, that is so much needed and has so long been desired. At all events, we feel persuaded that a collection on the lines we have conceived is not only useful but more needed in Italy than in any other country. Even should this attempt be doomed to failure, we believe that the work will be successfully carried on by others, in that it meets a real want of the present time. An enormous amount of historic material has been accumulated and is increasing from day to day; this should not remain the privileged monopoly of a handful of scholars, but must be reduced to order and made accessible to all readers. Thus only can our country be taught to appreciate its true past and true present, and gain accurate knowledge of the part Italy has formerly played, and of the part she may and should now assume in the history and civilisation of the world.



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## BOOK I

### *FROM THE DECLINE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO ODOVACAR*

## CHAPTER I

### THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE

WHAT caused the fall of the Roman Empire? The first reply that occurs to us is this: That the Romans were corrupt and enfeebled by corruption; the Barbarians, while rougher, were also stronger and less corrupt. When the latter had once crossed the Rhine and the Danube, their ultimate victory was assured; the Empire was bound to fall, new social conditions were bound to arise. But what had corrupted and weakened a people that had been for so many centuries a model of discipline, virtue, and strength—a people that had conquered the world? Its corruption was a consequence, not a cause, and was the first symptom of the decline that had already begun. The Empire that Livy had seen bending beneath the burden of its own greatness could not last for ever.

The Empire had brought into being that moral and civil unity of the ancient world which was a necessary preliminary towards the formation of nationalities. Nationalities, in fact, can neither live nor thrive unless so closely inter-related as to feel themselves members of

the same family. But their rise put an end to the existence of that ancient world which recognised the absolute predominance of one civilisation alone, outside of which were only barbarians. Therefore while, on the one hand, and seen from afar, the fall of the Empire may appear an extraordinary, an unexpected event; on the other we are positively moved to amazement by the length of its duration. In fact, under one or another form, we witness its posthumous survival throughout the Middle Ages. Later still, we see vain attempts made to restore it to life, first by Charles V. and then by Napoleon Buonaparte. The truth is that the unity of Europe and the diversity of the nations within its borders are two equally undeniable facts of which the vicissitudes of modern history are the results.

Rome was a city—a commune that began by conquering and assimilating all neighbouring populations, and conquering Italy by their means, and, with Italy, in like manner mastered nearly the whole of the then known world. Naturally, however, the rule of one city over so vast a territory, over such diverse races, all subject to the same government, the same laws, and the same official language, encountered greater difficulties as it extended more widely. The assimilation of the Roman populations had proved comparatively easy, but Africa, Spain, Rhoetia, and Gaul opposed an increasingly obstinate resistance. Then fresh obstacles had to be faced in Asia Minor and in Greece, where the Romans encountered, for the first time, a higher civilisation than their own. After conquering the country by force of arms, they were conquered in their turn by the culture of Greece, and were obliged to fuse their own with it in order to spread both through the world. Thus, by the time the Empire reached to the Rhine and the Danube, it no longer possessed any real kernel of unity corresponding with its outer shell.



The Empire was neither a state nor a nation ; it was a compound of different races, held together by force and subject to the same civilisation. Beyond its frontiers stretched a very vast country, inhabited by militant barbaric tribes, who were pressing to the front with the terrible rush of a river in flood.

Roman society was deeply shaken by this state of things. First of all, the constitution of the army was fundamentally changed. But the army was the chief engine of conquest, chief basis of the Empire. Formerly, as Gibbon justly observed, the armies of the Republic consisted of owners and cultivators of the soil, who sat in public councils, voted the laws, and defended Rome by force of arms. The welfare of their country was bound up in their own welfare. A battle won was their fortune, a battle lost their personal ruin. All material and moral interests, consecrated by religion, combined to make them heroic soldiers and citizens, who, when war was over, returned quietly and modestly to their fields. Who could suppose that the inhabitants of Rhoetia, Spain, and the African coast would fight with the same faith and ardour in defence of a power to which they were often alien and hostile ?

These armies, sent to guard distant and ever-extended frontiers exposed to continual attack, necessarily became standing armies. The men of whom they were composed had been called away from their homes and their land, if they had any. This often remained untilled, while the owners were forced to serve in foreign parts as long as their strength lasted. Accordingly, to meet the pressing need and growing difficulty of obtaining fresh recruits, it was necessary to tempt them to take service by offering higher pay and additional privileges. Hence the custom of allowing even slaves to be enrolled, and especially barbarian slaves, who speedily formed the bulk of the

Roman legions. In this manner war was reduced to a trade, and the strength of the army consisted in its discipline rather than its patriotism. Yet such was the force of its discipline, such the magic effect of the sacred names of Rome and the Empire on the minds of men, that even from all those incongruous elements was welded the formidable host that continued to do wonders for several centuries longer.

The maintenance of this huge army in distant parts was an enormous expense. Consequently the country was more and more heavily taxed. Little by little the chief mission of the Curia and Decurions of the communes became that of squeezing more coin from the already impoverished people. As those magistrates were held responsible for the contributions demanded, even when the inhabitants were unable to pay them, official posts were no longer positions of honour to be eagerly sought, but burdens which every one tried to shirk, even by flight into voluntary exile. Thus private interest, formerly identical with the public good, was now opposed to it, which in all states of society is an unfailing symptom of moral decadence and weakness.

Continual wars led to continual increase in the number of slaves. The leaders of armies as well as purveyors and governors of provinces amassed enormous fortunes. Wealthy men became always richer, poor men more impoverished and crushed down by usury. The latter were usually reduced to becoming dependants of rich landowners as tenants more or less attached to the soil, and paying rent for land that had been formerly their own property. This gave rise to a genuine social-agrarian question that became a considerable factor in promoting civil war and general decadence. The middle class being destroyed, there arose a class holding large estates—the so-called *latifundia*—men owning many tens of thousands

of slaves, and possessing estates from thirty to forty square miles in extent—almost whole provinces, in short. A *latifundium*, or estate of this size, naturally tends to increase, by absorbing neighbouring bits of land and, establishing the system of cultivation on a large scale, also quickly exhausts the soil and diminishes its produce. Thus Italy could no longer feed either her inhabitants or her armies, for even the grain-supply from Sicily had decreased. Accordingly the country began to depend on Africa for its food stuffs, and ran the risk of starving for lack of help from that quarter.

Throughout the vast territories of the Empire numerous cities were scattered, many of which were military or civilian colonies. These cities were organised on the pattern of the capital, having their own assemblies, magistrates, schools, baths and temples, aqueducts, barracks, and amphitheatres. They spread in a thousand different directions, from the central point—the Roman Forum—to the extreme limits of the Empire. Everywhere—and never more than five or six miles apart—were stations with a sufficient number of horses to maintain rapid communication with every part of the Empire. Country houses and farms were thinly sprinkled about the almost deserted rural districts, which were cultivated by slaves and tenants (both classes being nearly on the same footing), who went back to their cities and farmhouses at night. Trade, which was very limited, was also in the hands of slaves, of whom there was a multitude. Gibbon states that in Claudius's reign the population of the Empire amounted to 120,000,000, of whom 60,000,000 were slaves. But although this estimate is open to doubt, it is an undeniable fact that revolts of the slaves more than once brought the Empire to the verge of destruction.

An absolute sovereign was at the head of this complicated social fabric, and under him the army and the

great landowners exercised a tyrannous rule. Before long, the army claimed the right of making, unmaking or, at least, of approving the Emperors, and when split into parties would proclaim several different men at the same time, thereby causing very serious, and often bloody, conflicts. The great landowners held the highest offices of the State, as by hereditary right, and were the chiefs of an enormous bureaucracy. They lived in the cities, together with a mob of slothful paupers, who could only be prevented from rioting and kept in good temper by abundant doles of corn, and plenty of public games and entertainments : *panem et circenses*. When we also remember that in this vast, divided, and disorganised Empire, the same barbarian tribes who were actually threatening its frontiers, already supplied the majority of its soldiers and slaves, we shall easily understand that no power on earth could now avail to arrest the impending catastrophe.

Besides all these factors—civil, military, and economic—of division and weakness, another and by no means inconsiderable one, was furnished by the religious question. Christianity was advancing victoriously from the East, announcing the advent of a new revelation, a new morality. It is true that its theology was the result of a mixture of Greek philosophy engrafted on the Gospel ; but it aimed at the destruction of Paganism, which was the real basis of the Empire. Monotheism was the negation of polytheism ; revelation was not in agreement with the old philosophy. Christianity condemned all violence and force, declared all men and all nations to be equal before God, whereas it was by violence and force that the Empire had subjected all nations to Rome. Christianity, likewise, made the earthly city, the work of men's hands, subject to the heavenly city, the work of God. For Christianity, the social life of this world was of no



account, save as a preparation for the life beyond the tomb. Everything constituting the grandeur of Rome, *i.e.*, the social fabric, patriotism and glory, the very aim of its existence, and all that it held most dear, were now reduced to nullity. Thus the question was not merely that of substituting one religion for another, but of demolishing the fundamental principles of philosophy, of literature, of all civilisation, of a whole moral world, to erect others in their place. It may be easily imagined what profound consternation this caused in Rome, what cruel wounds it inflicted! Thus we can understand the ferocious persecutions which ensued, and why the most ferocious of all was ordered by the best and most conscientious Emperors. But the blood of martyrs seemed to nourish the new plant, and only served to increase the luxuriance of its growth. All who were oppressed turned with ardour to the new faith which, profiting by old Roman institutions, founded a universal Church that rapidly gained possession of every class of society. It overthrew pagan altars to erect others in their place; it transformed ancient temples; it founded charitable institutions, hospitals, and schools, which were practically strongholds destined to aid in destroying the old order of things. The fall of the Empire was no terror to Christians, seeing that it implied the fall of Paganism. Even the irruption of barbarians—for the most part already converted to the faith—was regarded by them as providential, since it was destined for the chastisement of those who still clung to “the false, lying gods,” and kept open the doors of the temple of Janus.

That all this should reduce morality to chaos, that men of the old order should abandon themselves to scepticism, to despair, or even to the worst and most obscene forms of vice, cannot cause surprise. Nevertheless, the Empire must still have had enormous vitality, seeing that it

continued to exist for several centuries longer, steadily repulsing the repeated attacks of powerful barbarian hordes. We have proofs of its mental, as well as its material, vitality in the diffusion and importance throughout the Empire of the Stoic philosophy that, although imported from Greece, practically acquired a special character in Rome by seeking to assume the guidance of human life, and well-nigh took the place of religion. Throughout the world's history it would be hard to find any nobler, more heroic, yet at the same time more hopeless attempt than this of the Stoics. In the midst of an arbitrary conglomeration of so many different peoples, the forced fusion and confusion of so many creeds and so many different forms of the Paganism that was everywhere tottering to its fall, they sought to revive the old religion and save it from Christianity's victorious attacks, by inculcating the conception and worship of the purest, most disinterested virtue. Renouncing all hope of a future life, all hope of reward, either here on earth or hereafter, despising posthumous glory, and careless of contemporary opinion, they inculcated virtue as an end in itself; and virtue as the sole purpose of life, its own self-contained reward, flowed freely and irresistibly from the heart of man. The serene tranquillity with which the Stoics faced death in the cause of justice was at one time so contagious that they appeared to be creating a new race of heroes, destined to revive the glories of ancient Rome. Unfortunately, it was merely a philosophic experiment, only to be achieved by a few chosen spirits. There was no hope that it could penetrate to the masses, or have the same elevating effect upon them as Christianity, which appealed to all men, and took hold of all. It was a brief flash of lightning, as it were, illuminating the Empire with a fugitive radiance, and this flash seemed once more repeated by the spread of neo-Platonism, as taught by Porphyry and Plotinus.

Marcus Aurelius was the living and most splendid personification of the Stoic creed, which reigned with him on the Imperial throne. Indifferent to glory, contemptuous of all material and visible grandeur, a friend of virtue and justice, he was opposed to war. But when the borders of the Empire were threatened by the Marcomans, who crossed the Danube in junction with other tribes, he took command of the army, and, fighting to the death with the skill of a trained general, finally repulsed and routed the foe. Even while the conflict was going on he did not neglect his philosophic meditations, for on retiring to his tent at night, he continued to write the *Thoughts* which have immortalised his name. "No one," says Renan, "has ever written with equal simplicity, and so entirely for his own use, desiring no witness save God. His pure morality, free from every tie of dogma or system, rose to a height that has never been surpassed. His book—the most purely human ever written—has an undying youth." Nor was he the last of the really great Emperors. From the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus (96–180 A.D.), we find in Nerva, Trajan, and the two Antonines, a series of sovereigns possessed of fitting justice, wisdom, and virtue for the government of the world. The republican Machiavelli, the bitter enemy of Cæsar and ardent eulogist of Brutus, regarded that period of the Empire with the most enthusiastic admiration. Gibbon tells us that were he asked to state at what time during the world's history mankind had been happiest, he could point to no other than that very period. Nevertheless, even while carefully slurring over the cruel persecutions dealt to Christians by some of the Emperors in question, he is yet obliged to add that, in those times, all depended on the will of the autocrat and the army. In fact, before and after that period, some extremely bad Emperors occupied

the throne. Then the disorganising forces which could only lie dormant for a short space, quickly burst forth, bringing to the surface all the social decomposition and corruption, which could be no longer arrested, and which was inevitably bound to open the road to the barbarians.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BARBARIANS

THE sudden attack delivered by the Cimbri (114 B.C.), their unexpectedly furious advance and repeated success, opened the Romans' eyes for the first time to the peril threatening them from Germany. It is true that C. Marius had completely routed the foe in two great battles (102 and 101 B.C.), so that for about fifty years the Roman frontiers were left in peace. But even Julius Cæsar, after winning many victories, was faced by a Germanic host led by Ariovistus, which, passing the Rhine, poured into Gaul, and fought its way on with desperate valour. Cæsar drove back this horde, and pursued it across the river. There, however, he found a new world, as it were : a numerous, warlike, and semi-nomad population ; a state of society entirely different from that of Rome ; a very severe climate ; a land of bogs and forests, incapable of affording supplies and stubbornly opposing the advance of the Roman army. His keen observation and remarkably practical mind made him recognise at once that it was hopeless to think of permanently conquering, much less Romanising, those northern tribes, and accordingly he again retreated across the Rhine.

But when this valiant chief was dead the Romans forgot to imitate his caution. They once more crossed the



Rhine, penetrated into the heart of Germany, and imported there their own laws, taxes, and administrative system. Consequently there was a formidable insurrection, headed by Arminius, which annihilated an army composed of three legions. The Consul Varus and his principal officers died by their own hands to avoid outliving such disaster and disgrace (9 A.D.). Arminius, and also his brother, had been trained in the Roman army, had fought bravely in its ranks, and had been loaded with honours. Suddenly, however, he returned to his own people, assumed the leadership of the revolt, and, feigning friendship with his former comrades in arms, lured them into an ambushade, and then fell upon them with the utmost ferocity. His Roman prisoners were mutilated, slaughtered, and hung. The eyes and tongues of many were torn out, and all were treated with the most cruel insult. The dead body of Varus was exhumed and ignominiously treated. Even Marbodius, the chief of the Marcomanni, a foe of Arminius, and who had tried to found a kingdom with institutions copied from the Romans by whom he had been trained, and of whom he feigned to be a faithful ally, became their declared enemy in the hour of peril. Hence it was clear that the Germanic tribes regarded the Romans with an instinctive and inextinguishable hatred, that neither training nor military discipline could in any way abate. Germanicus was sent to avenge Varus's defeat, but this brave leader's victories were won at a heavy cost. In the climate, the forests, morasses, and, above all, in the persistent hostility of the inhabitants, he found ever-growing obstacles. Also, a tremendous storm destroyed a considerable portion of his force during his retreat towards the sea-coast.

In the closing years of his life Augustus became convinced that the Empire should not be pushed beyond the

Rhine or the Danube, should renounce all idea of fresh conquests, and gave advice to that effect in his will. In fact, a line of fortifications was erected on the bank of either river, and, generally speaking, the Empire adhered to this wise course. Trajan alone, intoxicated by visions of glory, crossed over the Danube, and made a victorious advance. And although later on he, too, saw the wisdom of prudence and retraced his steps, Dacia, on the farther side of the river, still remained a Roman province, although this was afterwards seen to be a serious mistake. In fact the easily fortified line for the defence of the Danube was left neglected, inasmuch as it no longer marked the Imperial frontiers, which were now pushed on into eastern Dacia where it was less easy to hold them securely. Nevertheless, for about two hundred and fifty years after the defeat of Varus all barbarian attacks were successfully repulsed. Indeed, the defence of the frontiers became the Empire's constant occupation, almost its chief *raison d'être*.

Who were these barbarians, and what was the object of their persistently renewed attacks? As it is generally admitted, they once inhabited Asia, together with the tribes who later became Greeks and Romans, and in junction with them formed part of what is known in modern parlance as the Aryan family. After a period of existence in common they divided, and migrated in different directions. Those who pushed on to Greece and Italy made rapid progress owing to the milder climate, more fertile soil, more fortunate geographical position, and also to the facility of intercourse with Phœnicians and Egyptians. But those who settled in Germany were deprived of these advantages, and living isolated from all contact with civilised nations in a sterile land, where the climate was severe, had developed in the course of many centuries a strange form of society which, to Roman eyes,

seemed that of mere savages. Yet these barbarian tribes were not savages, and in altered conditions of life, as they proved on being brought into touch with civilisation, were capable of rapid improvement.

Julius Cæsar was the first to give exact particulars concerning these northern tribes. He found them, so he tells us, leading a semi-nomadic life, tilling the ground in the roughest way. They lived by fishing, hunting, and, above all, by the produce of their herds, which formed their chief care. Their usual diet consisted of meat, cheese, and milk. They worshipped the sun and moon, fire, the forces of nature, all things they could see, and that benefited them. With gross superstitions and cruel customs, they had as yet no order of priesthood. But what seemed to him most remarkable of all was the fact that these nomadic tribes had no individual ownership of the soil, which was always the collective property of villages, or rather of clans, *Cognationes*, according to his term, or *Sippen* as they are called by the Germans. Wherever these wandering clans came to a halt their magistrates, or chiefs, divided the occupied ground among them. After one year they were ordered to move elsewhere, and again share the ground in the same manner. Their dwellings consisted of wooden and wicker huts, which could be easily pulled to pieces and carried away as portable property on carts, together with their household gear, their old folks and children. This mode of life was an admirable training for war. Hunting, raiding, and attacking their neighbours to gain fresh land were the continual and necessary employments of a people whose primitive agriculture speedily exhausted the soil. Cæsar was much surprised by the spectacle of a mode of life so utterly different from that of the Romans, and asked the barbarians the reason of it. The explanation he received was that they lived in that way for fear lest a

more settled cultivation of the soil should make them lose the habit of fighting, and lest dwelling in better and more solidly built houses should unfit them to support heat and cold. Likewise, too, lest inequality of fortune and lust of gain should enrich the powerful and impoverish the weak, they endeavoured to avoid the cupidity that gives rise to factions and civil wars, so that the populace, noting that their own fields were equal to those of their leaders, should be satisfied with the justice awarded them.<sup>1</sup> It is hard to believe that the barbarians should have expressed themselves exactly in this style. But doubtless it expressed more or less the views taken by all in those days when comparing the barbarian order of life with that of Rome.

The same idea predominates even more clearly in the "Germania" of Tacitus, our principal authority for a somewhat closer knowledge of the northern tribes. The particulars Cæsar gives us, although few and fragmentary, are clear, precise, and drawn from his own observation and experience. On the other hand, Tacitus gives us a short but thorough treatise on the country, although we have no assurance that he had ever been there. In any case he can have seen only a small portion of it, and most of his information was acquired second-hand, either from Cæsar, the "summus auctor," as he styles him, or from others who had crossed the Rhine. In addition to this, his "Germania" has a set purpose, and its moral and political tendency is very marked. He had a fixed idea (in which he resembled eighteenth-century writers) that primitive peoples, being nearer to man's natural state, are, therefore, even as the ancient Romans, braver, purer, and more honest than races who had been corrupted, like the Romans of his time, by a refined and artificial civilisation. Burning with patriotic ardour, and inspired by an almost

<sup>1</sup> "De Bello Gallico," iv. 1, v. 22, vi. 21 and 22.

prophetic sense of the ruin with which the Empire was threatened, he sought to obviate the peril by reconverting his countrymen to their former rectitude. Hence his enthusiastic description of the barbarian customs, his lofty idealisation of the barbarian mode of life. Undeniably he is a great historian, a great thinker ; but, unlike Cæsar, who is always soberly clear and precise, Tacitus is also a mannerist, whose style, for all its vigour, is often so obscure as to admit of many and diverse interpretations. Accordingly, his work has been the subject of infinite disputes, especially when, as often occurs, it does not quite accord with that of Cæsar. Nevertheless, such divergence may be very easily explained. Tacitus wrote a hundred and fifty years after Cæsar, and by that time Germany was considerably changed. During the intervening period, the barbarians had been long in contact with the Romans, and the passage of the Danube and Rhine had been closed to them exactly when other tribes perhaps were pressing against them from the east. Therefore the semi-nomadic life they had led in Cæsar's time was fast becoming impossible for them, and compelled them to settle more or less permanently on the lands they had seized.

However this may be, even Tacitus describes the inhabitants of Germany as living in a state of barbarism, totally illiterate, knowing so little of metals as scarcely to use them even for weapons, and generally ignorant of money, although certain border tribes had learnt the convenience of it from the Romans. Mainly employed, like their forefathers, in hunting and fighting, all household duties and tillage of the soil was left as much as possible to their old folks and women. Nevertheless, the produce of their flocks and herds was their chief sustenance. They grew wheat, and extracted a beverage from it that took the place of wine. They were temperate



in everything save drink and play, no longer wore solely skins of beasts, but also woollen robes. Their ancient shadowy divinities were now endued with personality, and Tacitus tries to establish their resemblance with the gods of Rome. Their Tius (the Vedic Dyaus), supreme god of the clear sky, also become, from the bellicose nature of the people, the god of war, is confused by him with Mars, and consequently placed in the second rank, while he assigns the highest position to Wustan (the Odin of the Edda), the god of air and storm, and names him Mercury. Donar, Wustan's son,<sup>1</sup> the god of thunder and lightning, and endued with prodigious strength (the Norse Thor), is sometimes confused with Hercules, at other times with Jove. These and the few other divinities have human passions, fight among themselves and take part in human disputes. There were also numbers of spirits or demons haunting the earth, air, and water, the forests and mountains. A priestly order, non-existent in Cæsar's day, had now been established. Even human sacrifices were offered by the barbarians to propitiate their gods. Hence it is impossible to give credence to what Tacitus presently states, *i.e.*, that they built no temples to their gods, almost as though unwilling to profane them by a material form of worship, but spiritually adored them in the forests where these invisible divinities were ever present.<sup>2</sup>

As we have already said, these barbarian tribes now abode somewhat permanently in the tracts they occupied; but were still without cities, which they regarded as prisons in which "even the fiercest beasts would grow weak."<sup>3</sup> Their dwellings were no longer movable huts

<sup>1</sup> These names are recorded in those of the days of the week, in Italian, German, and English. As the Italian '*Martedì*' is derived from Mars, so *Tuesday* and *Dienstag* from Tius, or Dyaus. As *Mercoledì* comes from Mercury, so *Wednesday* from Wustan. *Giovedì* comes from Jove, and *Donnerstag* and *Thursday* from Donar.

<sup>2</sup> "Germania," 5, 6, 15, 17, 19.

<sup>3</sup> "Historiæ," iv. 64.



of wood alone, but the use of bricks and mortar was still unknown. The houses, as in Swiss, Tirolese, and German villages at the present time, stood detached from one another, on small plots of cultivated ground, also owned by the inmates of the dwelling.<sup>1</sup> This may be noted as a first step towards private possession of fixed estate. Land, nevertheless, was still the collective property of the now almost permanent village. The tribe no longer changed ground every year, but only when migration became a necessity, either because the soil was too far exhausted to provide for the population, or because some mishap in war obliged the tribe to seek refuge elsewhere. But within the territory held by the village, or "mark," as it is sometimes called, there was a continual rotation of occupancy. Tacitus has something to say at one point regarding the mode of dividing the occupied ground, the mutation of crops, and the interchange of land among the families who cultivated it; but the passage is excessively obscure, and has been interpreted in no less than six different ways. The confusion of all these contradictory renderings has been also much increased by the efforts to discover not only what the writer intended to say, but also various points on which he was silent and possibly knew nothing.

After stating that the barbarians were ignorant of the practice of usury that had wrought so much evil among the Romans, Tacitus goes on to say that "the lands are occupied by all, according to the number of the cultivators among whom they are divided; this mode of division being simplified by the vast extent of the occupied tract. Every year the tilled fields are changed, and always some portion is left unused (probably that reserved for grazing). As they (the inhabitants) are not confined to narrow limits, they take no trouble to promote the fertility of the

<sup>1</sup> "Germania," 16.

soil. They are content to grow corn alone, have no orchards, no artificially irrigated pastures, no gardens." <sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, the barbarian village was no longer so mobile as in Cæsar's time ; but within its limits there was perpetual change, for no one cultivated the same field for more than twelve months. Such part of the ground as was turned into pasture was always for the general use, since the collective ownership of the land was still maintained. Tacitus gives no further particulars, and it were useless to seek for more. But a clearer idea may be obtained of the state of things he describes by glancing at the constitution of the Teutonic Mark <sup>2</sup> at a much later period, in the Middle Ages. The latter state of things was undoubtedly different from that of Tacitus's time, but nevertheless had been slowly developed from it by natural evolution, and therefore retained some evident traces of its origin. Part of the land was occupied by houses scattered among the fields, with gardens about them as described by Tacitus. Another part was reserved for a common pasture ground. Lastly, a third portion was cultivated according to very minute and fixed rules, such as would have been impracticable at the early period of which we are writing. This third portion was distributed among the various heads of families, who were bound to work their respective fields in such wise that a third of them should be left fallow each year, so that at the end of three years every part should have had its due term of rest. Although in course of time these fields came to be assigned to the same families for increasingly long terms, yet the shares of ground converted into pasture were always for the public use, thus recording the ancient

<sup>1</sup> "Germania," 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Mark* (March), as though to mark or indicate the limits of the village, and often also of the communities (*Markgenossenschaften*) forming parts of the village. Sometimes, however, the March is the tract left as a public pasture ground.

origin of the still existent rule of holding property in common. This state of things, if not exactly that described by Tacitus, was evidently derived from it, and helps us to understand it more clearly.

These barbarians, to whom cities were unknown, were even more ignorant of the meaning of a State. Both Cæsar and Tacitus found them divided into many different peoples, every one of which was arranged and subdivided into what those writers named in Latin style the *Vicus*, *Pagus*, and *Civitas*. The *Vicus*, or village, was a most elementary and vague form of association, based upon the ties of blood forming clanships (*Cognationes*, *Sippen*, *Sippschaften*), with which they were often confused. Several *Vici* conjoined formed the *Pagus*, in German, the *Gau*, resembling a Swiss canton, forming the strongest nucleus and almost the organic unit of barbarian society. Several *Pagi* in union constituted the *Civitas*, the people or race, as some say, the chief barbarian social entity, which, in Cæsar's time, seems to have been far weaker than in that of Tacitus.

Barbarian society was constituted on an entirely military basis, so that *populus* and *exercitus*, freeman and man-at-arms, meant one and the same thing. Here, one might say, we already find the first germ of what was to develope, centuries later, into the compulsory military service, and district organisation of the German army. In those early days, the army was formed on the decimal system into hundreds or *centuries* of villagers recruited and organised in the *Pagi*, and united by the bonds of kindred, under the command of the heads of either their villages or their clans, since even in such matters the ties of blood were always held predominant. Consequently, several modern writers have given the name of Hundred or *Hundertschaft* to the *Pagus*, or *Gau*. But in fact the *Gau* varied very much in extent, being sometimes almost

the size of a *Civitas*, when, naturally, the *centuries* being formed in smaller centres, there was a tendency to attribute the title of Hundreds to the villages themselves and confound the latter with their trained bands. This has given rise to endless controversies. Yet the civil and military organisations, although so closely connected, could not be then, and indeed never had been, identical. Hence, were it even absolutely proved that the *century* was organised solely in the *Vicus*, or solely in the *Pagus*, that would by no means imply that the *century* and the *Vicus* or *Pagus* should be confused with each other. It should also be noted that in spite of the great similarity in those days of the numerous Germanic tribes and in the general character of their civil and military systems, there was always much variety as to details between different localities and different tribes. Only an exact knowledge of those details such as we still lack and, perhaps, may never obtain, could enable us precisely to define and determine the general character of a state of things that was so entirely different from our own, and therefore must remain, at least on some points, uncertain and obscure to us.

The Germanic village was under the rule of the *Majores natu*, i.e., of the heads of families or clans, who on all serious matters consulted the people, of whom they took command in time of war. The *Gau* was governed by one or several *Principes*, who were also styled *Magistratus*, and sometimes *Reges*, by the Roman writers. They were chosen from the leading families of the different villages, since even among the Germans there was a class of nobles and a class of slaves. The first was composed either of the oldest families who had formed the first nucleus of the village and gathered other families about them, or individuals who had won special distinction in the field. Slavery was comparatively mild; every

slave receiving an arable field from his master, and paying rent for it in produce or cattle. Subordinate to the *Principes* were the village headmen, who constituted a species of Privy Council and decided on all minor affairs. On graver matters, above all as to making war, the advice of the people was always asked. At certain fixed periods of the year both ordinary and special assemblies were convened. In time of peace the *Principes* administered justice in the *Gau* and the village ;<sup>1</sup> during war they commanded the army. In Cæsar's day they seemed to exercise religious functions also, but these had disappeared in that of Tacitus, when a sacerdotal order, hitherto unknown, had come into existence.

As we have previously remarked, the *Civitas* seems to have been originally constituted in a very defective manner. In fact, Cæsar declares that in times of peace he found it to have no civil government (*in pace nullus est communis magistratus*).<sup>2</sup> For the council of the *Civitas* (*Consilium Civitatis*), to which Tacitus attributed so much importance, is so rarely mentioned by him as to make us doubt whether it were really a vital element of the Germanic society of his time. Therefore the *Gau* or *Pagus* had greater independence in Cæsar's day ; could undertake forays on its own account, without paying much heed to the wishes or prohibitions of the *Civitas*, from which indeed it sometimes separated outright in order to join another *Gau*. The *Principes*, at the head of every *Civitas* formed a species of Senate, which decided on minor matters, and discussed the preliminaries or weightier points which had to be submitted to the popular assembly, who signified approval by clashing of swords, and disapproval by tumultuous cries. This general assembly held its ordinary meetings either at the new or

<sup>1</sup> "Jura per pagos vicesque reddunt."—"Germania," 12.

<sup>2</sup> "De Bello Gallico," vi. 23.



full moon, and its special meetings at irregular intervals as necessity imposed.<sup>1</sup> The *Principes* were elected by it, and there is reason to believe that the function consisted in confirming the election of those previously proposed by the *Pagi*. The same assembly conferred the right to bear arms on youths who had attained the legal age, which, as Tacitus expresses it, was the *toga virilis*, or first honour, conferring on them the right of having a share in the republic,<sup>2</sup> or as we should put it, in "public affairs."

The government of the *Civitas* appears to have been usually carried on in a republican manner, although on many occasions its head seems to have ruled as a monarch, especially when any *Gau* attained predominance over the rest. But what chiefly gave strength and unity to the *Civitas*, drawing to it not only *Pagi*, but even *Civitates* of different tribes, and thus constituting a confederation bearing the name of the leading *Civitas*, was the outbreak of war. Naturally, for any campaign a military chief or *Dux*, was required, on the pattern of an Ariovistus or Arminius—a military dictator, in fact, exercising absolute power, who often retained his position after peace was concluded, and then became a real sovereign, such as we occasionally find appearing, more particularly in eastern Germany. The *Dux* was naturally chosen for his military qualifications, but the princes for the nobility of their birth: *Reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt*.<sup>3</sup>

Another prevailing institution among these barbarians was the so-called *Comitatus* (*Gefolgschaft*), gathered round the *Princeps* as well as the *Dux*. It was composed of youths of the highest birth and courage, who formed a bodyguard as of paladins to one of their chiefs and were his inseparable companions-at-arms. And as it was a dishonour for any one of them to survive his chief in

<sup>1</sup> "Germania," 11 and foll.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 7.



battle, so, too, it was a dishonour for the chief to let them surpass him in valour.<sup>1</sup>

If on reviewing the preceding statements we now proceed to draw a comparison between barbarian and Roman society the contrast between them will be plainly seen. The latter was composed of an urban population spread over a large number of cities connected by highways, with stretches of open country tilled by slaves or tenants. The former, on the other hand, was a rural population scattered over land that it cultivated according to its own pleasure. Although even this population comprised both nobles and slaves, far more equality prevailed in it. Differences of fortune mainly consisted in the differing number of flocks and herds. The collective ownership of the soil greatly assisted in uniting the interests of all who fought for the defence of the common territory and deliberated side by side in the popular assemblies. The action of the State was *nil*, since it had no practical existence and everything bore a personal stamp. Crime was punished by allowing the injured party or his kindred to avenge it, and all was arranged by giving satisfaction to individuals instead of to the community. Ties of blood constituted the real basis of society, and partly, too, of the army, which was formed of family groups. In Rome, on the contrary, the State predominated over all, and society was entirely based on legal bonds. Also, the Romans were the first to create private property, by freeing it from its archaic form, thus giving an energetic impulse to individual activity and social progress. But in the struggle for existence the stronger and more fortunate despoiled the weaker, and by abolishing small holdings caused the creation of *latifundia*.

But here on the one side there was enormous wealth, on the other a howling multitude of starving paupers,

<sup>1</sup> "Germania," 14.

while all were cruelly taxed for the maintenance of the army.

If we now tried for a moment to imagine a fusion of these two different social worlds, we should see, on the one hand, how the idea of the State, of law, and of impersonal rights, gave birth to greater order and discipline ; on the other, we should see the revival of small holdings and the land populated anew by free tillers of the soil. But in real life chemical combinations of this kind can be only produced by war and brute force ; consequently when these societies came into violent collision, one of the two, however modified, would necessarily conquer and crush the other. Which would be the victor ? Roman society was a vast and marvellous organisation of great expansive force and power of assimilation. Had it not been threatened by internal decay it would have certainly continued to subject, bind together, and absorb fresh races, and repulse all assaults. It had done this for many centuries. But its victories served to foster the elements of decomposition within and of weakness without the State. Meanwhile the Germanic tribes continually renewed their attacks, urged on by the irresistible need of fresh land that drove them all towards the West. They advanced in tumultuous and ever-increasing hordes like the waves of a storm-lashed sea.

Fortunately for the Empire, this Teuton flood, being split up into a multitude of different races always at strife with one another, had no national unity. This was shown by the fact that while demanding new territory they voluntarily offered to serve under the banners of the Empire, and fought valiantly against their own countrymen. Many battles with barbarians were decided for the Romans by their German legionaries. This may have created the idea that by means of discipline it would be possible to master and assimilate many of the tribes and

thus reduce all the others to subjection. But the example of Arminius proved this to be a mere dream. Barbarians trained under the Roman standard became excellent soldiers, excellent captains ; but, always retaining their Germanic character, were fiercely hostile to the Roman name and Empire despite their admiration for it. Thus, even more than by their common origin, they were kept united by a common hatred. No matter what benefits they received, this hatred was never extinguished. Rome's greatest enemies—those who destroyed the Empire—Alaric, Odovacar, Theodoric—had been trained in the Roman legions. And although in quiet times their racial antipathy slackened, yet in face of any general danger, and, above all, when they found a valiant chief to lead them, it blazed up in full strength, and with the speed of lightning united them in huge confederations, all burning with the same fury. At such times they rushed forward like one man and with irresistible impetus. This was seen even in the days of the Cimbrians, of Ariovistus and Arminius, and was repeated time after time. It is true that this united action never continued for long. The moment of peril passed, it melted away ; but while it lasted it might at any time deal a death-blow to the Empire, especially on account of the vast number of tribes that Germany could bring into the field, and the enormous number of barbarians already enrolled in the Roman army and included among the bondsmen of Rome. Nevertheless, the passage of the Rhine or Danube once achieved and the West flooded with their hordes, it would have been difficult, or indeed impossible, for the barbarians to organise any settled scheme of action. This they instinctively divined, and it proved an added source of weakness by considerably diminishing their confidence in themselves as opposed to the Empire. For they recognised that the Empire was still very strong, both

in its civil and its military constitution ; consequently they admired it as something sacréd and eternal, even in the heat of their fiercest assaults.

But, as we have already seen, their foes were exposed to even greater disadvantage. If at any time that marvellous unity, binding and concentrating all the varied forces of the Empire, were even momentarily disorganised by some furious barbarian assault, and suffered heavy disaster at any point, everything threatened to fall to ruin at once, precisely because everything was linked together and owed its vitality and strength to this closeness of cohesion. The individual trained to live for the State alone, and under its protection, could conceive no possibility of existence without it. When abandoned to his own resources he felt like a stray atom in chaos ; he could imagine no possibility of withstanding those Germanic hordes of which every unit pressed forward, maddened with bloodthirsty zeal. He felt as one who suddenly beholds houses thrown down by an earthquake, and finds the ground yielding under him, or as one trapped in a burning theatre. Among the barbarians, on the contrary, such sensations were unknown, inasmuch as they formed part of a society divided and subdivided not only into separate nations, but also into separate groups, or cantons, which could be very easily united, disjoined, and again brought together. Whenever some *Civitas* was vanquished and split up into *Pagi*, the latter could either stand by themselves or be fused with the *Pagi* of another *Civitas* without feeling any dismay. If, by reason of the destruction of his village or of the group to which he belonged, any individual barbarian was suddenly isolated and thrown on his own resources, being accustomed, by forest life, to rely on his own courage and strength of arm, he had no feeling of alarm and readily joined the first tribe he fell in with. All this made the barbarians

often believe, and, later, caused many to repeat, that the Romans were terror-struck at sight of them, and trembled like women. This too, in spite of the fact that the Romans had routed them a short time before, and as soon as broken links were mended, defeated them again and drove them to precipitous flight.

Thus, for about two centuries and a half, the Empire was not only continuously busied in repelling partial inroads from across the Rhine and Danube, but was more than once assailed by formidable hordes of confederated tribes, who penetrated so far into the interior that truly Titanic struggles were required to secure the safety of the Empire. One of these conflicts was the great battle fought by Marcus Aurelius, to which we have already referred. Suddenly, for some unexplained reason—possibly because ousted by other races—an immense multitude of Germanic tribes were seen advancing, led by the Marcomanni and Quadi. They poured into Dacia, passed the Danube, invaded the Empire, and for the first time the sacred Italian soil was trampled by the feet of Teuton warriors (167 A.D.). It was then that Marcus Aurelius forsook his studies, assumed command of the army, and with the skill of a great captain, won repeated victories, thrust the enemy back over the border, and carried on the campaign until his death, on the 17th of March, 180. But in the course of this long and glorious struggle it was seen that the strength of the Empire was becoming exhausted. It had proved necessary to pit barbarians against barbarians, even to the point of admitting certain tribes within the frontiers—a dangerous example that led to fatal results later on. Nevertheless, for the next hundred years matters went smoothly enough, until the same course of events being repeated again and again on an increasingly vaster scale, finally produced far graver consequences.



In fact another serious battle had to be fought with the Goths, regarding whom a few words must now be said, inasmuch as it was this race that eventually struck the deathblow of the Empire. There is a widely spread belief that the Goths were originally inhabitants of Scandinavia, whence, for reasons unknown to us, they pressed forward in a southerly direction. In the days of the Antonines we find them in East Prussia, at the mouth of the Vistula ; towards the end of the third century they were in South Russia, in the vicinity of the Black Sea, together with the Gepidæ, and divided into Ostrogoths and Visigoths, *i.e.*, Eastern and Western Goths. But their Scandinavian derivation and their lengthy march southwards are considered doubtful by other authorities, who hold to the theory that the Goths were really of East German origin, and rather than one distinct race were a mixture of various tribes who spread from north to south and then advanced towards the west. Some writers again consider them derived from the Getæ, and would confound them with that tribe. But these are questions upon which it is difficult to form a decisive opinion, and the more so as during the Middle Ages many different races were indiscriminately styled Goths.

But in any case those particular tribes, moving from Southern Russia towards the west, began to hurl themselves against the frontier posts of the Empire, which, as we have said before, had been greatly weakened on this side since Dacia had been annexed. After many sanguinary attacks the Goths finally attempted a genuine invasion (268 A.D.) with a very formidable host, and bringing their old folk and women in their train. But they again encountered a determined resistance from the Roman legions commanded by the Emperor Claudius. The latter informed the Senate that notwithstanding the



disorder in which the Empire had been left by his predecessors, and in spite of the lack of arms and of all that was needed for war, he was marching to defend his territories against a host of 320,000 Goths, who were already across the frontier, and was resolved to conquer them or perish on the field. The numbers of the foe were probably exaggerated, or may have also comprised the non-combatants. Likewise the fleet of 6,000 ships attributed by some writers to the Goths may be considered preposterous, and indeed other authorities reduce the number to 2,000. In any case it was an invasion on a scale such as had never been seen before, yet Claudius successfully repulsed and routed the foe in the two great battles of 268 and 269 A.D. The first of the two was fought at Naissus, in Servia, and was not a decisive victory. Nevertheless, even those who declared it to be a Roman defeat, admitted that 50,000 Goths were left dead on the field. In the second campaign the Roman cavalry kept the Goths hemmed in among the Balkan Mountains, where nearly all of them perished either by the sword, plague, or famine. A portion of the survivors found safety in flight, others were made prisoners or slaves, while some accepted service in the Roman ranks. Much booty was captured, and such a host of women that every legionary had two or three to his share. This is an additional proof that the Goths had planned a veritable invasion and not a mere raid. Then Claudius wrote again to the Senate saying: "I have routed an army of 320,000 Goths; I have sunk 2,000 of their vessels." These successes gained him the surname of *Gothicus*. But the great number of unburied corpses caused a violent epidemic of plague, to which he succumbed—a sacrifice, as it were, to his own prowess.

This victory was undeniably a fresh proof of the enormous strength still retained by the Empire. But it

also proved the inexhaustible strength of the barbarians, seeing that, in spite of such enormous loss of life, they continued their attacks without intermission. It is plain that their dead were quickly replaced by other tribes of different races, who flocked to their army from all parts. Claudius' successor, the Emperor Aurelian (270-75), a good soldier as well as a skilled politician, after opposing a valiant resistance to the Goths, finally came to terms with them and yielded Dacia to them of his own accord, on condition that they should keep to their own side of the Danube. The cession to the barbarians of this fertile and, by that time, almost thoroughly Romanised province, compelled the emigration of a great part of its inhabitants. Nevertheless, as Augustus had advised, the frontiers of the Empire could be now withdrawn to the stronger line of defence on the Danube. In fact Aurelian's action was generally approved; and there ensued a whole century of comparative peace with the Goths, only interrupted, during the reign of Constantine, by three wars, in which the barbarians were continually beaten, and finally with a loss, it is said, of 100,000 men by the sword, starvation, and cold.

This line of the Danube, however, having been so long left unfortified, was still the most vulnerable point of the Empire. The Goths in Dacia were already in great force, and their numbers always on the increase, from the continual accretion of fresh tribes—this, too, while there was likewise a growing contingent of barbarians in the army appointed to defend the Danubian frontier against other Germanic tribes.

## CHAPTER III

REFORM OF THE EMPIRE—DIOCLETIAN AND CONSTANTINE — RELIGIOUS DISTURBANCES — ARIANS AND ATHANASIANS—NEO-PLATONISM — JULIAN THE APOSTATE — BISHOP ULFILAS AND THE CONVERSION OF THE GOTHs

THE continual dangers to which the Empire was exposed had frequently shown the urgent need of thorough reforms, which were actually carried out by Diocletian (284-305) and by Constantine (323-337). The first improvement required was the creation of firmer administrative and military unity, by concentrating all power in the hands of the Emperor, making him a genuine autocrat, and likewise endowing him with sacred attributes. In order to lighten the labours of the government, and, above all, to avoid the continual peril of a contested succession, Diocletian had summoned Maximian to a share in the government, with the title of Augustus, and then chose two other partners, Constantine and Galerius, with the lower title of Cæsars. This division of government implied no division of the Empire, over which Diocletian still retained supreme sway. On the decease of any one of the four rulers, the three survivors were bound to name his successor, and thus prevent, it was hoped, continual shocks and agitations. But in this respect the reform proved a failure ; for on Diocletian's

abdication the Empire was plunged in continual disturbances (from 305-323) until Constantine was elected sole Emperor and completed the most useful and essential part of Diocletian's scheme of reform.

The Empire was divided into four Prefectures, *i.e.*, of Italy, Gaul, Illyricum, and the East. The civil power was clearly separated from the military, and both were worked on parallel lines and equally in subordination to the supreme authority of the Emperor, who, with his attendant ministers, ruled over all. The Prætorian Prefects, having entirely resigned what military powers they had formerly possessed, were placed with exclusively civil functions at the head of the Prefectures, which were divided in Dioceses ruled by Vicars, and these Dioceses subdivided in Provinces under Presidents (*Præses*), as Consular Governors, or Correctors.

Then followed a long string of subordinate officials whose rank and attributes were most precisely defined, and who were distributed all over the Empire to supervise the administration of affairs and, above all, to accelerate the collection of taxes. The army was organised on the same system : with *Magistri militum* (*peditum ed equitum*), under whom were the *Duces* and *Comites*, and so on down to the lowest petty officer. This reform undoubtedly prolonged the existence of the Empire by strengthening the army and improving the discipline, order, and unity of every branch of the government. But it also led to heavier taxes, and to a more oppressive method of levying them ; it involved the Empire in a vast network of bureaucracy of which the evil and unavoidable consequences soon began to be felt. Rome had a special Prefect of its own (*Præfectus Urbi*) in addition to the Senate, which although retaining some of its former prestige, had no longer its old power. Thus, both Rome and Italy were reduced to the position of provinces, and

not only subject to the provincial government but likewise to the provincial land-tax. For some time past Rome had been only in name the capital of the Empire. In fact, Diocletian and his three colleagues made Nicomedia, near the Black Sea; Sirmium, west of Belgrade; Augusta Treverorum (*Trèves*), and Milan, their official abodes. The truth was that the necessity of defending the lines of the Rhine and the Danube, and even of the Euphrates, on account of the incessant war with Persia, had tended for some time to shift the Empire's centre of gravity towards the East, and this tendency had now become more openly pronounced.

As we have already said, Diocletian's scheme of reform was carried out by Constantine. The Christians suffered cruel persecution from the former Emperor, but Constantine, on the contrary, recognised the irresistible power of the new religion and solemnly adopted it, in the hope of strengthening the Empire by its aid. The only other event of his life of any real historical importance was the transference of the capital from Rome to Byzantium on the Bosphorus. The choice of the new capital, named Constantinople in his honour, was a very happy choice, for it was not only nearer to the Danube, and a commercial centre of the very first rank that could be easily provisioned from Egypt, but had great strategic advantages as an impregnable, natural fortress. The strength of the position was proved by the resistance it opposed for many centuries to the attacks of innumerable foes, while Rome, on the contrary, was frequently captured and sacked.

But this change of capital produced many varied results. Italy and Rome felt forsaken as it were, and cut off from political life. The union of Christianity with the Empire—both being of an universal nature—naturally gave rise to the conception of an universal Church, which



in fact was soon formed, and actually on the model of an Imperial institution. For Rome, being no longer the political capital, was now impelled, in memory of her past, to become the religious capital of the world. Her bishop was not content to be solely the successor of St. Peter ; but determined to be likewise the successor of Romulus and Remus, Cæsar and Augustus, by founding a religious empire equally vast; equally powerful, and of greater solidity than the political empire that was now crumbling to ruin. Rome was strongly seconded in this purpose by the Italian people, in whom the religious life began to manifest an activity that was soon to become so restless and so general as to be fused with the very existence of the whole nation. Unfortunately when Constantine, the head of the Empire, was converted to Christianity, he also claimed to be the head of the Church. He convoked and presided over councils, took part in theological disputes, decided them by force of his authority, and publicly announced his decisions. The Bishop of Rome could not tolerate this state of affairs for long, and, indeed, often disputed it. Thus were sown the first seeds of the strife that was to last through the Middle Ages. The State was soon in open conflict with the Church ; the religious feeling of the East, of the Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople with that of the West and of the Bishop of Rome, while the conflict was no little embittered by the great difference in the intellectual and moral temper of the two races.

A proof of this was speedily given by the theological dispute started between the Arians and Athanasians, which spread with the speed of fire from one end of the Empire to the other. It may seem very strange to us moderns that a subtle controversy on the Trinity should then have had power to excite men's minds to such a pitch. The question, however, touched not only a



fundamental tenet of Christianity but the conception of God and of the Divine relations with mankind. The Almighty is accepted by our reason as the First Cause, by our feeling as our good Providence, and this brings Him nearer to us, and endues Him with an almost human personality. Christianity satisfied this twofold need of man's mind, by acknowledging in God the Father the Creator of the Universe, and in Jesus Christ His Son the same God in the likeness of man who suffers death to redeem us from sin and give us salvation. The Greek spirit, as the genuine originator of the Christian theology, soon began to spin subtle distinctions, Arius maintaining, for instance, that the Son being created of the Father could not be one with Him, could not be *ab æterno*, but must have had a beginning, no matter how remote. This theory was hotly opposed by Athanasius, who had been trained at Alexandria in Plato's philosophy, which regarded the Almighty under His triple aspect as the first cause, the *logos*, or reason, and the animating spirit of the universe. Therefore Athanasius firmly upheld the conception of one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, that had been already introduced in the Gospel according to St. John, and made answer to Arius: "By your doctrine you deny the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Son is of the same substance (*homoousius*) as the Father." "And you," retorted Arius, "believe not in one God, but in two Gods." In those times Synods and Councils were held in rapid succession. Bishops and prelates were kept continually on the move, and to such an extent that, so it was said, even the posting service of the Empire was thrown into disorder. In the public streets and squares, in the churches and private dwellings the only topic discussed was that of God the Father, God the Son, and their identity or non-identity of substance. The Council of

Nicæa (325), convened by Constantine, proclaimed the Athanasian doctrine; but the East decidedly leaned to that of Arius. The latter's followers tried to arrange a compromise, and their efforts were seconded by Constantine, who, also for political reasons, did his best to maintain the religious unity of the Empire. A few persons calling themselves semi-Arians, held that the Son was not of one substance (*homoousius*) with the Father, but yet of a substance resembling the Father's (*homoiousios*). As Gibbon remarks, the whole difference was reduced to a diphthong, to one letter of the alphabet. But this did not serve to abate the heat of controversy. Others again, adopting the Sirmian formula—so-called after the place where it had been started—tried to avoid the disputed point by smothering it in vague generalities. Athanasius, however, would accept of no compromise, and rejected every attempt at conciliation. Calumniated and accused by his adversaries, persecuted by Constantine's son, the Emperor Constantius, deposed by the Patriarch of Alexandria, and driven into exile, he still continued his propaganda. When reinstated in his See, he resumed his special work with greater daring than before. One night (February 9th, 356, A.D.) his church was surrounded by the Imperial troops, but he remained quietly seated in his place, and disregarding the prayers of his flock who implored him to fly for his life, continued his reading of the Psalms. At last, when the soldiers advanced threateningly towards him, and only a few of the faithful still stood their ground, he suddenly vanished with them—by some miracle, it was said—and withdrew to the Thebaid, where he continued to preach his creed.

That a man of energetic, heroic temper should cling so firmly to his own faith, was neither an isolated nor even an extraordinary case in those times. But the great

historic value of the battle Athanasius so bravely fought, was the fact that he was backed by the whole Western world with Liberius, Bishop of Rome, at its head. This prelate openly championed his cause, denied that the Emperor had any right to depose him, and spoke as though the Church of Rome were already superior to that of Constantinople, and entirely independent of the Empire. When efforts were made to overcome Liberius by flattery, and rich gifts were sent to him, he ordered these offerings to be left at the threshold of St. Peter's, that the Lord's temple might not be desecrated by their presence. When an attempt was made to use force against him, so violent a tumult was roused that the Pope had to be hurried away secretly, and by night, to Milan. There large sums of money were offered to tempt him to renounce Athanasius. But he indignantly spurned the gift, saying: "The Emperor may keep his money to pay his soldiers." And to the eunuch who was pressing him to accept the gold, he added: "A thief such as thou to dare offer me alms, as though I were a criminal! Become a good Christian before venturing to address me!" So he elected to go into exile rather than yield to the imperial demands.

The Emperor appointed the Bishop Felix as his successor in Rome. But the people deserted the churches and never acknowledged him. When Liberius, broken by age and infirmity, was induced to adopt the vague Sirmian formula, the Emperor forced him to return to Rome, under the strange delusion that he could share the mitre with Felix, the anti-Pope. But the people, men and women, old and young, rose in furious revolt, all shouting: "One God, one Christ, one Bishop alone!" (357). And when Felix attempted resistance swords were drawn and he was driven to flight. Thereupon Liberius came back in triumph. But no one heeded the

fact of his having agreed to the Sirmian formula. In the eyes of Rome, his acceptance of it signified nothing.

This heated struggle brought many things to light. First of all, it was now clearly seen that the ever-practical spirit of the Roman Church was resolved to fearlessly maintain the firm unity of faith without accepting any sort of compromise, and resolved to avoid all the hair-splitting theological distinctions which, although marvellously suited to the more flexible Greek, were thoroughly repugnant to the spirit of the Latin tongue. So the Church strictly adhered to the doctrine that was destined to triumph, *i.e.*, to the Athanasian conception of the One and Triune God. It was also seen that the Bishop of Rome now assumed a totally independent position with regard to the Emperor, as head of the universal Church. In Italy, and more especially in the Catacombs of Rome, a new generation had sprung up, hopeful and full of daring that gave its support to the Bishops and feared neither the Emperor nor the imperial soldiery.

It cannot be denied, however, that the Arian and Athanasian controversy had split the Christian world into two camps. This fact was destined to smooth the way for an extremely curious scheme of some historic importance, that was started exactly at that time for the astonishing purpose of reviving Paganism. All of a sudden, with unexpected rapidity, a new philosophic creed was diffused among the most highly cultured classes in Rome. This was the so-styled Neo-Platonic philosophy imported from Alexandria, and chiefly due to Plotinus (205-270) and his disciple Porphyry. Expounding the philosophy of Plato by means of Oriental mysticism and symbolism, this new doctrine exalted the idea of the Divine element in the world and in the human soul, and declared that the supreme

happiness consisted in the contemplation of God, in whom the soul sought to be merged. While aiming, on the one hand, at revising and rehabilitating the worship of Pagan divinities, on the other, this creed plainly felt the influence of Christianity and by means of symbolism, attempted to harmonise it with a belief in heathen gods. It was a strange phenomenon, and a foretaste, as it were, of what was to occur in the fifteenth century, when Gemisthos Pletho also endeavoured, by means of Neo-Platonism, to revive the cult of the ancient gods of Greece. But the times were very different. In the fourth century Paganism was a stronger force and the Christian faith much more lively among the people at large.

It is certain that Plotinus preached his doctrines most fervently and obtained zealous followers in Rome. He held the goods of this world in supreme contempt, and deplored the existence of a body, since he considered it a hindrance to contemplation of the divine, although, according to his disciple Porphyry, this privilege was often conferred on him. The oracle had declared that his attendant genius was likewise divine. When Plotinus lay dying these were his last words: "I am making a last effort to unite that which is divine in me, with the divine element of the universe."

He came to Rome when forty years old and speedily gained an uncontested authority. All appealed to him as an arbiter, and dying men frequently entrusted their property and their families to his charge. The Emperor Gordian was one of his followers, among whom were even several senators, and one of these, Rogatianus, was so zealous in the new faith that, for love of it, he neglected his estates, gave freedom to his slaves, and rejected the highest offices. All this is an additional proof that there was still some moral force in the Pagan society of the decadence, although the fact is denied by many.



Nevertheless Neo-Platonism, even more than Stoicism, was a philosophic creed only fitted to evoke the enthusiasm of a few chosen spirits who were too deeply imbued with the ideas of the Pagan world to be able to accept the Christian creed outright.

One of these elect spirits was Julian, surnamed the Apostate, as having abjured the Christian faith in which he had been reared. A kinsman of Constantine and of lofty intellect, he was in course of time seized with a great admiration for Grecian poetry and mythology, plunged into Neo-Platonism, was initiated in the secret of the Eleusinian mysteries and began privately to sacrifice victims with his own hands to Venus and Apollo. During the first period of his public career (355-61), he bore the title of Cæsar and was in command of the legions in Gaul, where he won great glory by fighting the Franks and Alamanni and successfully driving them across the Rhine. He was proclaimed "Augustus" by his legions, and after the death of Constantine (October 5, 361), entered Constantinople with them on the 11th of December and immediately tried to reinstate Pagan worship there. But being likewise a philosopher, he proclaimed universal toleration, and thus won the favour of all those who had already suffered or feared persecution. Included in the number were the Athanasians of the East and the Arians of the West, who, thankful to be left unmolested for the moment, knew that the triumph of Paganism could not be more than a brief and fugitive phenomenon.

Julian's dream was political as well as religious. As *Pontifex Maximus*, he sought to restore the ancient divinities by means of Neo-Platonism, and determined—like a new Alexander the Great—to march to the conquest of the East. In the year 363, in fact, he led a formidable host against Persia, which was invariably



hostile to the Empire and now actually at war with it. After passing the Euphrates, and repulsing the enemy, he pushed on, in spite of endless obstacles, across an inundated region seamed with canals. Continually fighting and always victorious, he next crossed the Tigris, and in order to prevent his men from even thinking of retreat, burnt all the boats with which he had crossed the rivers, and marched into the interior of the land, now a deserted waste with its cities and crops reduced to ashes. There was no possibility of retreat, and Julian fought his way on triumphantly until he was mortally wounded on June 26, 363. But, even in his last moments, he remained true to himself, telling his friends he rejoiced that his spirit, freed from the flesh, was about to be reunited with God. He also prayed that the Empire might have a just ruler. His dream of conquest died with him, and he was succeeded by the very incompetent Jovian, who, in his haste to withdraw to Constantinople, ceded various provinces to the enemy, who had certainly won no success, and renounced the protectorate of Armenia, which had always been faithful to the Empire, and rather than be torn from it was now willing to undertake its own defence. He thus opened the door to the enemy, and with no personal gain, for he died in February, 364, before reaching Constantinople.

Another event, of which the results proved very serious, also occurred during the controversy between Athanasians and Arians, namely, the conversion to Christianity of certain Gothic tribes. This was subsequently followed by the gradual conversion of all the other barbarians. The Goths settled in Dacia for nearly a hundred years had speedily begun to feel the influence of Roman civilisation, which must have been already deeply rooted in that region. That such was the case is shown by the fact that, in spite

of German tribes having long dwelt there, and notwithstanding the harsh oppression exercised later by the conquering Turks, even now this region, although hemmed in by Magyars and Slavonians, still shows very visibly the enduring traces of the ancient Roman stamp. The country's very name of Roumania, its speech, history, and literature are so many confirmatory proofs. The Goths settled in Dacia also continued to keep in touch with the Empire. Thus they were gradually becoming civilised, though by very slow degrees, when at last a really great man arose among them, in their Bishop Ulfilas (311-381), who was the true inaugurator of their conversion and culture.

Ulfilas had spent his youth in Constantinople, where he learnt Greek and Latin and embraced the Christian faith. His whole life was subsequently devoted to making a translation of the Bible and to the conversion of his countrymen whose progress he also aided by teaching them the Gothic alphabet. His translation, some fragments of which still survive, is the oldest and most valuable monument of the Germanic language and literature. There has been much discussion and inquiry as to the reason for which Ulfilas adhered to the Arian doctrine instead of the Athanasian, especially as, until the Franks adopted Catholicism, all the other barbarian tribes likewise became Arians. Ulfilas, however, had joined the Christian Church at Constantinople, so was naturally trained in the Arian creed that prevailed there at the time. There is also reason to suppose that to the untutored Dacian mind, as indeed to that of all barbarians reared in coarse heathenism, it must have seemed easier to admit that Father and Son were of different substance, than to arrive, by means of Neo-Platonic philosophy, at the conception of the identical substance of God in Trinity and God in Unity.

But although the conversion of the Goths promoted their civilisation on the one hand, on the other, it increased their internal divisions and weakened their resistance to the Romans. In fact the Ostrogoth inhabitants of Eastern Dacia who penetrated into the interior of Southern Russia, all remained Pagans, like the Gepidi settled in Northern Dacia. But most of the Visigoths dwelling in the south-west part of the country and, accordingly, in contact with the Romans, became converts to Christianity. In addition to this religious division, a political split took place among the Goths. The Ostrogoths possessed a real sovereign in the person of Hermanric of the noble Amal line, and entitled as such to hold rule over all. But the Visigoths had separated from them and again subdivided. Some who were still Pagans were ruled by Athanaric, and were hostile to the Christianised Visigoths, who obeyed the rule of Fritigern instead, and maintained much closer relations with the Romans. Athanaric and Fritigern bore the title of Judges, possibly because, originally, they had been headmen of *Pagi*, i.e., the dignitaries to whom Roman writers applied the name of *Principes* or *Magistratus*, and who were likewise administrators of justice.

With all these tribal divisions there seemed reason to hope that, in those regions at least, the safety of the Empire would be long assured. All the more so when, in 365, Procopius and Valens were at war, and a section of the Visigoths crossed the Danube to reinforce Procopius, Valens, having worsted his rival, succeeded, after repeated struggles with the latter's barbarian allies (367-69), in forcing them to accept peace and retreat to their own land. Then, however, events of so unexpected a nature, that no mortal mind could have foreseen them, suddenly changed the whole state of affairs.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HUNS

ALL the various peoples with whom we have dealt so far, Greeks, Romans, Celts, and Teutons, belong to the Aryan group that, migrating from South-west Asia, poured into Europe by different routes. But there now appears upon the scene an entirely new race belonging to another great but substantially different group that is known to us under the name of the Turanian family. This race was to play a considerable part for some time in the destinies of the Empire.

In Central Asia there is a vast highland plateau stretching from east to west as far as the Ural Mountains, and situated between the Altai chain and that of the Taurus which branches off southwards. This highland region is populated by a medley of very different races. The Ugrian Finns occupy the western portion, the Turks, Mongols, and Mantchoos that trending towards the east. But in spite of many great and striking diversities all these hordes have the same customs and the same ethnological characteristics. Even their many different tongues are all monosyllabic and agglutinate. Owing to the severity of the climate and scarcity of food, with little water for irrigating the land and rendering it fit for the plough, the inhabitants are forced to lead a nomadic life, and dwell in tents surrounded by enormous herds of horses, cows, and in some parts other

animals as well. Meat and milk are their chief articles of diet, and their ordinary drink a liquor made from fermented milk. They are clothed in skins, live on horseback, and, when not fighting, are occupied in hunting wild beasts, such as boars, bears, and even tigers. The tent is their only home ; they have no houses, no villages, no towns. They are polygamous, and know no social bond save that of the family and the tribe. Nevertheless, different tribes readily combine, and on finding a valiant chief to take the lead, join together sometimes in enormous throngs. Being accustomed to a wandering life, and always prepared for war, it is easy for them to move on from one region to another with their women and children, waggons and tents. These races have often played a great part in the destinies of the world. From time to time we behold them pouring down from their highland plain, with the force of an avalanche, a mighty, devastating flood that sweeps everything before it. They form great empires which seem to master the world for a moment, then suddenly vanish as rapidly as they arose, to be replaced later on, in the same way, by other speedily formed states, which develop and disappear in a like fashion. Under the successors of Ghenghis Khan, we find the Mongols fighting simultaneously in Silesia and before the Great Wall of China. Their government was always military, being entrusted to many chiefs of armies, who had absolute power, and merely paid tribute to their supreme head. The same sort of government has been noted even among the Arabs—difference of race and temper notwithstanding—when they spread from Hindostan to Morocco, and thence to Sicily and Spain. It is an inorganic and primitive State-system that seems to have an infinite power of extension until the amalgamation of conquerors and conquered induces a process of decomposition, that also proceeds rapidly.



These Central Asian or Turanian races give no new ideas to the world, but often diffuse those of the other nations with whom they come in contact.

It seems as though Providence had preserved them in their original homes in a state of perennial youth and barbarism, in order to stir and reinvigorate the world when it was growing torpid and decadent. Among the members of this vast Turanian stock were the Huns, the reputed ancestors of the Avars and Magyars, who afterwards occupied Hungary, and still inhabit that country. They were Finns from the Ural Mountains. During the fourth century, being driven out possibly by other tribes of the farther east, they suddenly poured down southwards with incredible speed, inspiring general terror and causing many native tribes to take flight towards the west. In 374 the Huns fell upon the Alani in East Russia, and having crushed them, forced a certain proportion of the men to serve in their ranks; and with forces thus swollen pushed on to the Mæotian Swamp, or Sea of Azof, where they halted for a time before advancing against the Goths. The panic they excited wherever they appeared is clearly shown from the descriptions bequeathed to us by the chroniclers, and the legends related about them. Jordanes, the earliest Gothic historian, whose history is compiled from that of Cassiodorus, which was afterwards lost, speaks of these heathen, polygamous, nomad Huns in the following terms: "They are more barbarous than barbarism itself. They have no condiments to their food, nor use fire to cook it. They eat raw meat after having kept it for a while between their thighs and their horses' backs. They are of low stature, strong and agile of limb, and are always mounted; their visage resembles a shapeless lump of flesh rather than a human face, and instead of eyes shows only two glittering black specks. They have scarcely any



beard, since it is their custom to slash their children's faces with the dagger, so that babes may learn to endure wounds before tasting their mother's milk. A sword thrust in the ground is the god of their worship, and they live as animals in the likeness of men. Evil spirits and witches driven from Gothic forests gave them birth, and they were generated to wreak ruin on the Goths. The same evil spirits taught them what road to take on their march against the Goths. This was how the lesson was given : Certain Huns, while tracking wild beasts one day, sighted a strange doe who, flying before them, turned back from time to time as though inviting them to follow. So they followed on. After leading them to the Mæotian Swamp, and indicating an easy passage through it, the mysterious animal suddenly disappeared, thereby proving that it was truly one of the evil spirits hostile to the Goths."

At all events, it is certain that without any warning the Huns dashed down upon the Ostrogoths with such tremendous fury that all resistance was impossible. Hermanric, the king of the Ostrogoths, died by his own hand, and his subjects being completely routed, ended by joining the enemy's hordes. For eighty years they pursued this course, renouncing their national independence, but still united under their own chiefs. In this way the Huns continued to push forward in ever-increasing numbers, until they reached the banks of the Dniester, across which dwelt the Visigoths. Passing the river unexpectedly by night (376) they fell upon Athanaric's tribe, and excited so great a panic among them that part of the tribe sought safety in the Carpathians, while others fled to West Dacia, and there, joining Fritigern's Visigoths, infected them with their own terror. All were so maddened with fear that, although Fritigern was very brave, and is said to have had a force of 200,000

warriors, his only thought was to seek safety in flight with the whole of his people. No such spectacle has ever been seen again. This enormous army, with a host of old men, women, and children, with all their chattels on their shoulders and in chariots, a flying multitude, supposed to number a million, rushed to the Danube in order to cross it and find protection in the Empire. At first the Roman guards did their utmost to check this human inundation. Some of the fugitives, in fact, were thrust back into the river and drowned. But what resistance was possible when a million human beings of either sex and every age pushed forward, imploring mercy with raised hands, all trembling, blinded, and maddened with a deadly terror that served as a stronger impetus than the highest courage? Fritigern declared that he and his people were ready to serve under the Roman eagles on any terms. But how could the Romans believe his word? Who could tell what might happen? Yet, who could refuse?

At that time Valens was Emperor of the East, having been admitted by his brother Valentinian to partnership in the Empire, and after quelling the revolt of Procopius, his power seemed assured. But he was of a weak and vacillating character, and on seeing the impossibility of checking the flood of panic-stricken fugitives, he was deluded by the idea that the acquisition of a host of 200,000 men would be useful to the Empire. Accordingly he permitted the tribes to cross the Danube on condition that they came disarmed and gave hostages. But how could stipulations of any kind be enforced in that tremendous confusion? How, too, could victuals be found for this sudden influx of a million human beings? At first some attempt was made to count and disarm the new-comers. But it was soon abandoned perforce. Some of the fugitives were already in the last stage of exhaustion,

others, regardless of orders, pressed forward clamouring for food. The Roman officers took advantage of this to begin selling them provisions of any kind, however bad or tainted, at very high prices. And to satisfy their hunger the Goths eagerly gave their money, stuffs, and chattels—everything, in fact, save their weapons. It is even recorded that certain of them were persuaded to sell their wives and children as slaves rather than see them perish by famine.

Thus a million barbarians, of whom 200,000 bore arms, were within the borders of the Empire. The way had been opened to them, not by bravery or conquest, but by panic and flight. Nevertheless they had passed the barrier, and were famished, suffering, and excited to wrath by all the violence and injustice they had suffered. The valiant Fritigern immediately began to call his soldiers together, and re-establishing discipline, endeavoured to revive their self-respect and self-confidence. He was seconded in these respects by the arrival of more Visigoth and Ostrogoth tribes, who had crossed the river on purpose to join him, and likewise by the sympathy almost openly manifested towards his people and himself by the barbarians incorporated in the Roman legions. In a short time Fritigern and his men moved on to Martianopolis, the capital of Moesia, about seventy miles from the Danube. There the Goths soon showed that they were united and able to win their daily bread by force of arms. Then it was recognised that the worst consequences might ensue from Valens' unlucky mistake in admitting those wild tribes within the limits of the Empire. But, in any case, how could he have prevented so impetuous a torrent from breaking its banks and flooding the land?

Great distrust was soon shown on both sides. We are told that when the Roman general Supicinus invited the

Gothic chiefs to a banquet they came, fearing treachery, with a numerous escort. In the course of the meal a sudden clamour was heard of Goths and Romans fighting outside. Thereupon Fritigern immediately drew his sword and flew to place himself at the head of his men. Soon afterwards a skirmish took place (377) a few miles from the city, in which Supicinus and his imperials were beaten. That day, writes Jordanes, put an end to the barbarians' calamities, and to the security of the Romans. There is some truth in this. The battle itself was of little importance, but its moral effect was enormous. The tribes who had entered the Empire as fugitives imploring compassion and help, had suddenly changed into a threateningly aggressive host that was raiding all Thrace at will. Nevertheless, when they invested Adrianopolis they were easily driven off, since before the invention of firearms the walls of a city almost always presented unconquerable obstacles to a besieging force. When the Goths withdrew to the Dobrudscha, the Romans made an onslaught on their entrenched camp, barricaded by carts and baggage, with a furious valour worthy of ancient times; and a second battle was fought which, being indecisive, had to be followed by a third.

During these events the Emperor Valens was engaged in a campaign against the Persians, but on hearing of the revolt of the Goths he patched up a hasty peace in order to hurl his troops upon them. At twelve miles from Adrianopolis, on the 9th of August, 378, a great and decisive engagement was fought, in which the Roman soldiery gave splendid proofs of valour, but, owing to the incredible folly of their leaders, were doomed to defeat. After a long march, under a blazing August sun, they met the foe in so narrow a gorge that all were jammed together, and it was impossible to use their weapons freely. Forty thousand Romans faced death heroically. Valens

was in the field, but as his fate was never known various accounts have been given of his end. The defeat was a serious one, and certain writers, with considerable exaggeration, have compared it with that of Cannæ. At any rate, when the Goths renewed their attack on Adrianopolis, where the Imperial treasure was guarded, they were repulsed with an energy that surprised them, and when they beat a retreat, sacking by the way, and marched on to the assault of Constantinople, they received a still severer lesson ; for the well-mounted Saracen cavalry in the service of Rome pursued them at lightning speed, and pounced down upon them with the fury of savages. One Saracen, riding stark-naked, was seen to gallop after a Goth, unhorse him, cut his throat, and drink his blood. This deed struck terror into the barbarians, by proving that others could outstrip them in savagery.

## CHAPTER V

### THEODOSIUS

IN the East, therefore, there was no longer an Emperor, and the army had suffered defeat. In the Empire of the West, Valentinian I. had been succeeded by his son Gratian, who had been compelled by the legions to take into partnership his step-brother Valentinian II., a child of four years, and accordingly under the regency of his mother Justina, the fame of whose charms was only surpassed by the still greater beauty of her daughter Galla. Gratian assigned to Valentinian—or rather to the Queen-mother reigning in his stead—the government of Italy and of Africa. Meanwhile he was opposing a valiant front in Rhoetia and Gaul, against the barbarian advance in those regions. But stringent measures were required for the protection of the East where the danger was greater and more pressing. Convinced of the gravity of this state of things and of the general anxiety it inspired, he adopted the very wise plan of selecting Theodosius to share his power as Emperor of the East. A native of Spain, which had already given birth to the great Emperors Hadrian and Trajan, Theodosius was noted for his prudence and military skill. Accordingly his election was hailed with great favour by all.

The new Emperor promptly took up his quarters at Thessalonica, as a good strategic position, where, after



assembling and reorganising the army, he tested the mettle of his troops in a series of successful skirmishes which raised their confidence and lowered that of the Goths. Also, when the latter began to split up, on the decease of their chief, Fritigern, Theodosius profited by the opportunity to foment their dissensions by allowing some of the chiefs to join his flag, and showering so much favour on them as to win the reputation of being a friend of the Goths. Thus he was enabled to arrange a treaty of capitulation with them in 382, by which they were allowed to settle permanently in Thrace, on the footing of *fœderati*. Of the exact nature of this arrangement, in all its minute details, no information has come down to us. The Goths remained in Thrace as friends of the Empire, as recognising its supremacy and pledged to take arms in its defence if required. Houses were given them, and land to cultivate, while the fighting men received payment in money or grain. They were not incorporated in the Imperial army, but remained a united and separate people under chiefs of their own. Herein lay the danger. Nevertheless, if it be remembered that Theodosius found them armed and aggressive foes raiding the country at their will, also that it was no longer possible to drive a million of human beings across the Danube, and still less possible to destroy them, the treaty he had arranged was a wise and statesmanlike act. Such indeed was the general verdict. But meanwhile the Empire was sheltering a viper in its bosom. These barbarians who might rise in revolt at any moment, served as perpetual enticements to others who came across the river in small groups at a time, or were deserters from Roman legions, or fugitive slaves.

Thanks to his prudence and firmness, Theodosius had no trouble, save of this sort, from the Goths for the rest of his life. His good fortune increased from day to day,

whereas Gratian seemed an altered man ; for the latter neglected the government, and showed such excessive fondness for his barbarian soldiery as to arouse the jealousy of the Roman legions who, accordingly, deposed and put him to death after choosing Maximus as his successor (383). Maximus, however, aspired to be ruler of the whole Western Empire, and although at first on good terms with Valentinian II., soon fell out with him. Hastening over to Italy he drove the latter to fly with his mother and sister to Constantinople, where they appealed to Theodosius for help. Theodosius hesitated at first, having already too much on his hands. But feelings of gratitude bound him to the family of Valentinian I. Besides, he loved the sister of Valentinian II., whom he afterwards married, and meanwhile she joined with her mother in imploring him to avenge their wrongs. Accordingly, in 388, we find Theodosius at the head of his army, inflicting a repulse upon Maximus on the banks of the Save, and subsequently defeating and killing him at Aquileia.

Justina was then enabled to return to Italy with her son, Valentinian II., now aged seventeen. This youth meanwhile was entirely dominated by the Frankish leader, Arbogastes, who, having fought very bravely for him at Aquileia, and having slain the son of Maximus with his own hand, now claimed the right of playing the tyrant. Valentinian opposed his pretensions, and prepared to dismiss him. But the insolence of the Frankish soldier rose to such a pitch that the Emperor lost patience and rushed at him with drawn sword meaning to kill him on the spot. He was held back by his attendants ; and shortly afterwards (May 15, 392) he was found dead. Some supposed him to have committed suicide, but according to other authorities, he had been murdered by the followers of Arbogastes. The Frankish general was a heathen, and

the first barbarian who dared to assume the power, though not the name, of a Roman Emperor; but, as will be shortly seen, his example was frequently imitated later on. Nevertheless, as was always the case with these barbarian usurpers, he did not venture to mount the throne or to take the title of Emperor. He chose instead the rhetorician Eugenius, who was forced to assume the purple and act as his tool. In fact, although a Christian, Eugenius seconded Arbogastes, by favouring the Pagans, who were still somewhat numerous in Rome. By this means he hoped to create a party in opposition to Theodosius; but, on the contrary, it only increased the latter's strength. Theodosius, indeed, was now impelled to make war, not only by political motives, but by Galla, his wife, who was burning to avenge the murder of her brother Valentinian, and also by the bishop's clergy and people, who urged him to defend the Christian faith. Hence he decided to go to war; but, appreciating the distinguished valour of the Frankish chief and his mastership of his men, Theodosius employed two years (393-4) in preparations for the campaign. Hostilities were farther retarded by the death of the Empress Galla (May, 394), who had given him a daughter named Galla Placidia, possessing even greater charms than her beautiful mother, and who, after passing through a series of startling vicissitudes, was fated to become a great political force in that century of corruption.

As soon as the first shock of bereavement was over, Theodosius finally started on his campaign at the head of a formidable army. Among other contingents, this comprised twenty thousand *federated* Goths led by their best generals, and also accompanied by the youthful Alaric, who was destined to do greater deeds and achieve great celebrity. Pursuing the same route as on his march against Maximus, Theodosius came in touch with the

enemy on the banks of the river Frigidus, at a point equidistant from Ernona (Laibach) and Aquileia. The battle raged for two days, with varying results. Finally, however, being favoured by the fierce "Bora" wind that prevails in those parts, and which luckily blew full blast in the enemy's face, Theodosius obtained a complete victory (September 6, 394). Eugenius was captured by the soldiery, who cut off his head on the spot, while Arbogastes, on seeing all hope was lost, died like a Roman, by throwing himself on his own sword. This signal success had important historical results; for thus the whole Empire was united under the sway of Theodosius, and he ruled it with an iron grasp. At the same time, having destroyed the last remains of the Pagan faction, he was likewise enabled to reconstitute religious unity by the triumph, both in the East and the West, of the Athanasian doctrine, to which he had been steadily faithful from the beginning of his reign. These facts determine the value of that Emperor's position in history, and justly won him the title of Theodosius the Great.

By his firm adhesion to the orthodox creed he was able to bring the Empire and the Church into an even closer alliance than the Emperor Constantine had achieved. That the Church was greatly benefited by this union, and made rapid progress, is shown by the large number of ecclesiastics of equal eminence in morals and doctrine she then had in her service, such as St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose, the famous Bishop of Milan. This was also the period when that latin system of theology was being built up which may be truly said to combine religion, philosophy, and ecclesiastical discipline. The chief object of that system is the firm maintenance of the unity of faith and of the universal authority and political power of the Church. Another great personage of the same period was Damasus,

the Bishop of Rome, who succeeded to Liberius in 366. He ascended the episcopal chair in the midst of a furious riot, and speedily proclaimed the principle of the superiority of the Roman Church over all other Churches, and that ecclesiastics could only be amenable to ecclesiastical courts.

But although the union of the Church with the Empire gave strength to both, it contained the germs of future dissensions, as was proved even in the reign of Theodosius. This Emperor was much given to luxury and expense for the purpose of enhancing the dignity and splendour of his position. But all this demanded an increased taxation that led to repeated revolts.

At Antioch, during one of these outbreaks, the statues of the Emperor were cast down and his name was insulted. On this occasion he treated the rioters with clemency. But later on, in 390, a far graver revolt took place at Thessalonica, when the imprisonment of a charioteer of the Circus served as a pretext for the rising. A general of the Empire and several officials were murdered, and their bodies ignominiously dragged through the streets. Theodosius, who was in Milan at the time, was so enraged by the news that he ordered an exemplary, or rather ferocious, chastisement, which fell alike on the innocent and the guilty. It is said that seven thousand persons suffered death, and certain writers declare the number to have reached fifteen thousand. In any case, torrents of blood were shed. It was then that St. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, addressed to Theodosius a letter, still extant (Ep. 51), in which he censures the massacre, and calls the Emperor to repentance, inasmuch as it would be impossible, he says, for him to grant admittance to the temple of the Lord or participation in holy rites to one who had stained his hands with the blood of so many innocent persons.



Certainly St. Ambrose was one of the most remarkable characters of the age—one of those who proved what power and ascendancy the Church was attaining in Italy. The descendant of an illustrious Roman family, Ambrose began by filling high political posts, and then, in 374, was raised to the See of Milan, where he was adored by the people. In 386 he had the honour and happiness of converting St. Augustine to Christianity. The strength of his faith was only equalled by the indomitable energy of his character. In 385 he refused to grant the Empress Justina the use of any church in his diocese for the Arian cult. On that point he was absolutely inflexible. The Empire, he declared, could dispose of earthly palaces, not of the Lord's house, where force is of no avail. When Goth soldiers were sent to threaten him, he faced them on the threshold of the church, asking if they had implored the protection of the Republic in order to invade the House of God. Also when Priscillian's heretical followers were massacred he severely blamed the Emperor for the deed. No less severe was his censure when the same Emperor ordered him to rebuild a synagogue that had been burnt by the populace. On this occasion the Bishop wrote to him saying that were he to obey such an order he would be a traitor to his office. No house must be rebuilt in which our Lord Jesus Christ was denied. He repeated the same words in church when the Emperor was present, adding that the Emperor was bound to grant liberty of speech to the priest, who is forbidden to conceal his thoughts. This mode of proceeding tallies perfectly with the epistle mentioned above concerning the massacre at Thessalonica.

Certain writers have added that when Theodosius attempted to enter the Basilica, St. Ambrose arrested him on the threshold and said to him, "Art thou blinded so far by thy earthly power? Forget not that thou too art



mortal, and must therefore return to the dust and give account to God of thy deeds. The souls of those thou hast slain are as sacred as thine own." Then, in order to bend the Bishop's indomitable spirit, Theodosius is supposed to have sent to him his minister Rufinus, the man who had incited the Thessalonican massacre. At first this Rufinus tried to win the Bishop by flattery, but on receiving an indignant rebuff, declared that the Emperor would enter the church all the same. To which St. Ambrose replied, "He must first pass over my corpse." Legend has sought to colour a real incident by means of these minute details; and certainly they help to portray the character of the hero. Before entering the church Theodosius was obliged to make submission to St. Ambrose and do penance (December 25, 390) by repeating the 19th Psalm, ver. 25: "Help me, O Lord my God. O, save me according to Thy mercy." Undoubtedly nothing could be nobler than the heroic firmness displayed by the prelate. It also affords visible proof of the extraordinary power then assumed by the Church, and how it was forming in Italy a new generation of men to whom the future would belong. But if a Bishop of Milan could defy the Empire in such wise, what might the Pope not dare? The history of the Middle Ages gives sufficient answer to this question. Thus, while the seeds of coming strife were lurking in the union of Church and Empire achieved by Theodosius, no less peril was brewing for political affairs in general. This began to be realised after the death of Theodosius in Milan, at the age of fifty, on the 17th of January, 395—an event that occurred about four months after the great battle by the Frigidus that seemed to have assured the permanent stability of the Empire. Theodosius certainly had found it menaced by foes, torn by divisions and in a state of disorder; he had succeeded in reorganising, reuniting, and pouring

new life into it. But, unfortunately, this renovation could be only ephemeral. Persia, the Danube, and the Rhine had always threatened danger, and that danger was always on the increase.

The Goths were in Thracia in arms, and always in greater numbers. It had needed all the Emperor's vast energy and prestige to maintain the equilibrium between these diverse and jarring forces, which were ready at any moment to come to open conflict. His success in trimming so difficult a balance justly entitled him to be called Theodosius the Great ; but an iron hand and a powerful brain were demanded for the continuance of his work. Both were lacking when he passed away, and his two equally incapable sons succeeded to the throne of the Empire.

## CHAPTER VI

ARCADIUS AND HONORIUS—RUFINUS, STILICHO, AND  
ALARIC

EVEN in Diocletian's time the Empire had been nearly always divided in various parts, ruled by different emperors who were more or less subordinate to one of the number. This division of power, which was not incompatible with the unity of the State, had been originally suggested by the great difficulties to be met by any single ruler in governing the whole Empire and providing for its defence against enemies simultaneously attacking it on all sides. Theodosius, as we have seen, was strong enough to unite the entire realm under his own sceptre, but left it divided between his two sons at his death, assigning the East to Arcadius, and the West to Honorius, but without any intention of forming two separate Empires. Unfortunately this division of the government had to be carried out under unexpected conditions, which altered its character and finally led to the complete separation of the two Empires.<sup>1</sup> The election of the emperors was managed in many different ways, although always with the participation of the army, but even in Constantine's time, and more

\* "Arcadius Augustus . . . et Honorius Augustus . . . *commune imperium, divisia tantum sedibus, tenere coeperunt*" (P. Orosius, vii. 36). Marcellinus repeats almost exactly the same words.

notably in that of Valentinian I., the hereditary principle had come in force, every endeavour being made to restrict the succession to the same family. It was to this end that Theodosius had taken his two sons into partnership, and now these two sons were his successors and entirely independent of each other. Both, however, were still minors, Arcadius being eighteen, Honorius only ten years of age, and therefore both were unfit to assume the reins of government. Aware of this, Theodosius had left the elder to the guardianship of his chief minister, the Prefect Rufinus; the younger to that of the brave General Stilicho, *Magister utriusquæ militiæ*, a Vandal who had fought in his service against Eugenius with glorious success, and to whom he had entrusted the defence of the Empire. Thus the two infant emperors were not only independent of each other, but placed in the care of two such equally ambitious and powerful men that no harmony was possible between them. This state of things produced unavoidable difficulties in the future.

The government was still organised on the system established by Diocletian and Constantine. Four Prætorian Prefects were the respective heads of the four Prefectures, *i.e.*, of Italy, her islands, and Africa; Gaul, with Spain and Britain; Illyricum; the East. At Constantinople, as at Rome, there was a Prefect of the City and a Senate, but the latter institution was rapidly losing its political significance and sinking to the level of a Municipal Council. The Prefectures were divided into Dioceses, and these again into Provinces, which were subdivided into Municipalities organised like that of Rome with their Senate or Curia and their populace (*plebs*). These were the only institutions destined to survive the general dissolution of the Empire, although with substantial alterations. Side by side, as we have already seen, with the civil administration, came the military hierarchy, with its *Magistri peditum*

and *Magistri equitum*, two offices often combined in one person, who was styled in that case the *Magister militum*, or *Magister utriusque militiæ*. The number of these high military officials often varied ; in the Eastern Empire as many as five may be found. In Italy it was not unusual to find a *Magister utriusque militiæ*, and Stilicho held that office at the time of which we write.

Naturally, this twofold organisation, civil and military, proceeding on parallel lines, was intended to be subject to the supreme will of the Emperor alone. But this was no longer possible with two untrained and independent sovereigns, and with the jealousy and antagonism of their appointed guardians ; in addition, Rufinus, a native of Gaul, was crafty, ambitious, grasping, and cruel, and in virtue of these characteristics had mounted, step by step, to the highest honours. It being his task to find money for the administration and the army, he had been forced to increase the taxes, and was accordingly hated by the people. But, as he was Prætorian Prefect for the East, with his seat in the capital, having acted as Prime Minister to Theodosius after this monarch had reunited the East and the West in the last years of his reign, Rufinus now claimed the right of directing the general policy not only of the East but also of the West. Stilicho, on the other hand, having helped to re-establish the ancient unity by force of arms, and still commanding the army he had led to victory in that cause, had the full confidence of his legions. Besides, Theodosius had given him his own niece, Serena, to wife, and on his death-bed—according to the general rumour—had charged him to watch over both his sons. Accordingly, while Rufinus claimed the exclusive direction of the Imperial policy, Stilicho asserted his right to have the supreme command of all its forces. Also, while Rufinus, as head of the administration, represented the Romans, the barbarian

Stilicho, as head of the army, was the natural representative of the barbarian element that preponderated in his host. Hence the two principal personages of the Empire were unavoidably leaders of opposing parties—a situation bound to bear evil fruit before long.

Undoubtedly Rufinus had the more difficult position of the two, since, although he held the purse-strings, Stilicho wielded the sword. To fill the purse, taxes must be levied, and taxes bred hatred. There were intrigues brewing against him, even at Court, and all the more now that Arcadius, being much older than Honorius, already showed impatience of his guardian's inconvenient and permanent yoke. He proved this by marrying Eudoxia, the daughter of a Frankish general, a girl famed for her beauty, whose praises had been sounded to him by the eunuch Eutropius, *Præpositus sacri cubiculi*. This marriage was intended to spite Rufinus, who wished his own daughter to become the Emperor's bride. Nevertheless the minister's authority was still very great, as was presently shown.

The federated Goths being stirred to discontent by the absence of accustomed grants of money, and their leader, Alaric, being still more aggrieved by failing to obtain the title he coveted of *Magister militum*, they began to scour the land, rioting and plundering wherever they went. Thereupon Stilicho marched at the head of the army to quell the revolt; but Rufinus ordered him, in the name of the Emperor Arcadius, to reserve his energy for the affairs of the Western Empire alone, and to send back to Constantinople all troops belonging to the forces of the East. Now the latter consisted, for the most part, not only of barbarians, but of Goths. However, Stilicho being forced to obey the order, despatched the men forthwith, under the command of Gainas, a Gothic leader, who is said to have joined him in a plot against Rufinus, in



which Eutropius, the eunuch, was likewise concerned. However this may be, when the soldiers were encamped near Constantinople, and Arcadius, with Rufinus in attendance, was passing them in review on the 27th of November, 395, the minister suddenly found himself cut off and surrounded. Then a soldier rushed at him, and crying, "Stilicho strikes thee with this sword," killed him at a stroke. The body was then hacked to pieces by the mob. Some of the men stuck his head on a spear and carried it in triumph through the camp; while others brandished one of his arms with the hand extended as though demanding more taxes.

The murder of Rufinus greatly increased the power of Eutropius, who succeeded to his office; indeed the barbarians again seemed masters in Constantinople, having managed to obtain all the higher military and civil posts. This fact, however, provoked a strong reaction of Roman feeling. The rhetorician, Synesius, undertook to make this known to the Emperor, and urged him to "assume the command of the army like the Cæsars of old; to forbid the barbarians from invading the Senate, to forbid them to don the toga they despise, to forbid them from flocking into the legions and stirring up revolts which imperil the Empire." In conclusion, he added that "the army should be of Romans, who would defend their country." Nevertheless Gainas and the Goths still retained great power. It is true that the influence of Eutropius, who had been nominated Consul in 399, was also much increased; but the eunuch, being hated by all, was at variance with the Empress and Gainas. The latter contrived to have him condemned to death, and then, assuming the post of *Magister utriusque militiæ*, actually became the chief power in Constantinople. But the very fact of his predominance roused the national party to fiercer reaction

than before, and the strife grew still hotter when religious antagonism was added to the clash of politics.

At that time the Bishop of Constantinople was St. John Chrysostom, a man of great influence, great firmness of character, and likewise immutably faithful to the Athanasian doctrine, which, thanks to Theodosius, was the dominant creed in the diocese. The barbarians, however, were Arians, and accordingly Gainas, their chief, was indignant that there should not be any church in the capital of the East dedicated to their form of worship, and that they should be obliged to use one outside the city walls. All this, however, was strictly in accordance with the laws and regulations of Theodosius ; so Chrysostom refused to make any change, had those laws read to Gainas, and reminded him that, having entered the service of the Empire, he was bound to respect its decrees. But both parties being equally stubborn, the public feeling became so inflamed that on the 12th of July, 400, a very violent riot broke out against the barbarians. Many were killed, others had to fly from the city, while Gainas, defeated and pursued, sought safety in Dacia by escaping across the Danube with a few of his men. But the Huns put him to death, thinking to win favour thereby from the Empire. This was the most notable event of Arcadius's reign, inasmuch as, Constantinople being thus freed from barbarian hands, the Eastern Empire resumed its former Greco-Roman character, and maintained the same to its fall, while the Emperor was enabled to carry on the government with the support of the orthodox, national party. Nevertheless the federated Goths had still to be reckoned with, for they had occupied Thrace, spread into Moesia, and now, reinforced by all the disbanded fugitives from the army of Gainas, were becoming more and more mutinous, because for some time past they had received no pay.

The question was how to deal with such a host of malcontents and a whole threatening nation in arms.

Even during the time of Rufinus a plan had been conceived in the East to drive Alaric and his tribes into the Western Empire. Thus the former realm would not only be saved from an ever-present danger, but work would be cut out for Stilicho. Care was to be taken, however, to prevent any chance of the two barbarian generals making common cause against Constantinople ; as also the risk of Stilicho deciding to make serious war on the Goths, and, by successfully vanquishing them, becoming more powerful than before. It was for this reason that, shortly after the death of Theodosius, Rufinus had checked the general's progress by depriving him of a portion of his army. On the other hand, although a trusty soldier of the Empire, Stilicho was none the less of barbarian blood, and could not wish, even had he the power, to exterminate the Goths altogether. Neither would it be advisable for him to humiliate them too deeply without thoroughly routing them, inasmuch as that would only render them increasingly hostile and dangerous to Arcadius and Honorius. Hence Stilicho would have preferred to show them that he had the strength to keep them down, and then, according to the plan conceived by Theodosius, would have incorporated them in the Empire and thereby increased its power. By this method his military and political position would have been notably improved ; but that was precisely the result Constantinople most wished to prevent. Accordingly for some time, while the East was urging the Goths towards the West, the West invariably sent them back again : thus they were shuttlecocked, so to say, from one Empire to the other.

Naturally the tribes grew more and more incensed. Therefore, about the year 395 (the date is uncertain),

they finally elected a king of their own in the person of Alaric, who from his earliest youth had fought bravely under Theodosius in Italy. He was of the noble line of the Balthi, a name that Jordanes translates as audacious or daring (*id est audax*), and answering, in fact, to the English word "bold." After being trained to the discipline of the Roman legions, he was now raised aloft on his countrymen's shields as their king—an event of much importance, inasmuch as it again welded the federated Visigoths into a constituted nation, or at all events into an independent army within the Empire. Accordingly Constantinople was more anxious than before to get rid of these barbarians by pushing them still farther west. Only, again, there was Stilicho also in command of a formidable army, enabled to do what he chose with it, owing to Honorius's weakness of will, and therefore strong enough to hold his own. In fact, when Alaric advanced into Greece, devastating the land (396), Stilicho immediately took the field against him, and, driving him from the Peloponnesus, blockaded him in the mountains. Already he seemed to have the invader at his mercy; but, on the contrary, it was suddenly known that Alaric had managed to slip away through Northern Epirus with all his army and plunder. Many different rumours were current at the time. Some said he owed his escape to a skilful movement; others attributed it to negligence or treason on Stilicho's part; while according to another version it was the result of a secret agreement with Constantinople. At any rate, Stilicho returned quietly to Italy without attempting to follow him up, and Alaric withdrew to a part of Illyricum that appertained to the Eastern Empire. There he remained by the permission of Arcadius, who likewise granted him the coveted rank of *Magister militum*.

Thus the Goth sat astride, as it were, between the East

and West, and had every facility for resuming the route he had turned away from for a time. Meanwhile he was able not only to feed his men, but also to provide them with plenty of weapons from the Imperial stores.

A descent into Italy had now become his fixed idea, and this for many reasons. Constantinople urged him thither, in order to be finally quit of himself and his host. After the national revolt of July 12, 400, and the destruction of the barbarians, the East was no longer a safe or pleasant abode for the Goths. Besides, Alaric was also attracted to Italy by personal ambition and the spirit of adventure. The legend runs that an inner voice was always crying to him, "*Penetrabis ad urbem!*" It is difficult to determine what plan he had conceived; probably he scarcely knew it himself. Alaric was a daring soldier, but without real military or political genius. Like most of the barbarian generals of the period, who, having no country of their own, chiefly made war for personal ends, he resembled the soldiers of fortune of later times. But the fact of being at the head of a multitude of soldiery, with a numerous following of old men, women, and children, imposed upon him many duties and heavy responsibilities. It is impossible he could have dreamt of becoming Emperor of the West. He would not have known how to rule it; and besides, a similar idea would have seemed almost sacrilegious to a barbarian of his day. Hence he simply pushed forward, threatening and devastating as he went, always with the hope of finding some way of gaining a regular and permanent footing in the Empire.

Meanwhile Stilicho's strength and authority in Italy had been greatly increased, especially since he had succeeded in quelling Gildo's revolt in Africa (398). He had married a niece of Theodosius, and his daughter Maria was the wife of Honorius; also, in the year 400



he was raised to the rank of Consul. Accordingly he was considered in the light of a possible pretender to the Empire—if not for himself, for his son ; hence, while his authority had increased, so did the number of his foes. By sheer force of circumstances he had become, as it were, the natural defender of Italy. Therefore, at the first tidings of the barbarian advance, he hastened into Rhoetia and repelled an invading host under the command of Radagaisus, who appears to have acted in concert with Alaric. Stilicho then levied as many recruits as he could find, and, with his forces thus increased, made a descent into Northern Italy. Here his first task was to secure the safety of Honorius, who was then at Asti and in danger of being completely surrounded by the enemy. He persuaded the Emperor to transfer the seat of government from Milan, where he had generally resided, to Ravenna, which, besides greater facilities for defence, had the advantage of being a seaport. Accordingly, from 402 to 475 Ravenna was the fixed capital of the Western Empire, and afterwards became the capital of the Exarchate, as being the best point of communication with Constantinople.

Now, however, measures of defence had to be taken against Alaric, who was pressing forward with an enormous host. Accordingly Stilicho recalled the twelfth legion from Britain, and, what was far more serious, also summoned back the legions guarding the Rhine frontier, thus opening a door on that side to other invaders. His object was to provide against the more imminent danger, thinking that, Alaric once conquered, it would be easy to repulse other barbarian hordes, and possibly with the co-operation of Alaric himself. On the 6th of April, 402 (but even this date is not authenticated), the two armies came in contact at Pollenzo, on the Tanaro, twenty miles from Turin, and a pitched battle ensued. It was during the Holy Week ;



but, regardless of this, Stilicho took the enemy by surprise while celebrating the rites of the Church in camp. The victory was his, but the Goths effected their retreat without molestation. Again, after a second defeat, near Verona, they withdrew to their own parts without being pursued. This naturally led to rumours of treachery. Nevertheless, in 404, Honorius made his triumphal entry into Rome, accompanied by Stilicho. It was to celebrate this occasion that those gladiatorial games were held which had been so often—though vainly—prohibited at the instance of the Christians. This time, however, an Eastern monk named Telemachus threw himself between the combatants in the arena of the Colosseum and tried to separate them in the name of Jesus Christ. He was stoned to death by the crowd amid howls of wrath; but it is averred that the inhuman games were stopped from that day. The monk's daring attempt was another proof of the growing energy developed by the Christian spirit.

After Alaric's retreat, Radagaisus, who had been previously beaten in Rhoetia, again advanced with an army of 200,000 men, according to Orosius—and of no less than 400,000, according to other chroniclers—which shows how little credence can be given to their figures. At any rate, a very large army poured down into Tuscany, where Stilicho met it, drove it to the hills above Fiesole, defeated and starved it out, capturing the chief, Radagaisus, who was afterwards put to death (405). All the rest of the army perished or fled, wandering in all directions in search of food. But this victory, instead of enhancing the glory of the captain who had won it, only swelled the clamour of accusation against Stilicho, especially when news came that hordes of Alans, Sueves, and Vandals had crossed the Rhine, swept into Gaul (406), and were marching onward unmolested.

People said that if Stilicho found it so easy to crush Radagaisus, it was plain that at his will he could do the same with Alaric. But being a barbarian himself, he naturally preferred to leave the Empire at the mercy of barbarians. That was the reason why he recalled the legions from the Rhine, throwing Gaul open to the foe who would soon be invading Spain as well. Honorius should take example of his brother Arcadius, when the latter rid himself of Gainas who, had he not been destroyed with all his followers, would have made the Goths masters of the Eastern Empire, which had again become Roman instead. Unless similar precautions were taken in the West, all Italy, and Rome itself, would be soon subjected to barbarian rule.

All the Roman portion of the army was so inflamed with these ideas that in 407 the legions occupying Britain proclaimed a new Emperor, whose sole title to that dignity was his name of Constantine, but who afterwards showed unexpected force of character. He promptly hastened over to Gaul to combat the barbarians; but it was no longer possible to drive them back across the Rhine. Nevertheless, he managed to re-fortify the line of the river, so as to prevent the passage of other hordes. Meanwhile fresh legions from Italy were poured into Gaul by Honorius to re-establish his authority in opposition to that of the "tyrant," as Constantine was styled, from the alleged irregularity of his election. Thus there were two Emperors in the West fighting against each other and against the barbarians as well. The blame of all this was laid upon Stilicho; and therefore he was increasingly hated and slandered. In fact, notwithstanding the energy he had displayed in his victorious campaign against the Pagan chief, Radagaisus, men accused him of favouring the Pagans, and of aspiring to make his heathen son the Emperor of the West. Later

on, at the death of Arcadius (May 1, 408), it was asserted instead that he proposed to exalt him to the throne of the East. Not satisfied, men cried, with having given his daughter Maria in marriage to Honorius, he had induced that monarch, after her decease, to take his other daughter, Thermantia, to wife, heedless of the fact that the Christian clergy forbade marriage with a deceased wife's sister. In short, every weapon was used against him, and the end was achieved of making him equally detested by Christians and Pagans.

Worse still, the Emperor too was now stirred to jealous suspicion. Owing to a certain traditional susceptibility with regard to his Imperial authority, he could barely tolerate this Vandal who had excited the general aversion of the Roman nationalist party. Hitherto, however, he had concealed his feelings, and his natural weakness of character kept him in a state of indecision. After the battle of Pollenzo he seemed to approve of Stilicho's plan, namely, that of allowing Alaric to retain, subject to the suzerainty of Honorius, the entire Prefecture of Illyricum, although that province had been divided for some time past between the Eastern and Western Empires. Stilicho considered that this measure would pacify the Goths and place the whole of Alaric's army at his own disposal, and that with Alaric's aid he could re-establish order in Gaul and Spain by combating not only the barbarians but Constantine's usurped power there.

In accordance with this plan, Alaric had already moved away from Epirus, when his march was unexpectedly arrested by special orders from Honorius. Naturally the Goth was most indignant at this, and advancing towards Italy in a menacing attitude, demanded four thousand pounds' weight of gold as an indemnity for the outlay he had incurred. Thereupon Honorius was seized with alarm, authorised Stilicho to present and second Alaric's

demand in the Senate, with the declaration that it must be granted, since there was no means of resisting it. Accordingly the Senate also was compelled to yield ; but for one moment a spark of the old Roman spirit and vigour was fired, and the Senator Lampadius seemed to express the general feeling by his cry of protest : "*Non est ista pax, sed pactio servitutis !*"

In point of fact Stilicho was a barbarian, but a Romanised barbarian. From the union of the contrary elements constituting his personality, both his strength and his weakness were derived. Those elements co-existed in the Empire, and so long as they could keep their balance in it and continue to exist side by side without clashing, Stilicho's personality was representative of the world in which he lived. Herein lay his strength. His idea of making use of the Goths for the Empire's advantage might seem a combination of the policy that Theodosius had followed and urged him to follow in the hope of his having the will and power to maintain it. But at the first clash of conflict within the Empire of the two elements on which it was based, Stilicho's personal force in politics was bound to be destroyed and he was doomed to succumb. At this moment the conflict may be said to have actually begun. In fact, in spite of obtaining the demanded indemnity, the Goths remained discontented and threatening. On the other hand, the indignation of the Roman party had risen to boiling-point, and it was hinted that the sacrifice of Stilicho was absolutely required for the good of the Empire. Of course there were many to fan the flame, and among them was one Olympius, an officer of the Imperial Guard. The Roman legions then stationed at Ticinum (the modern Pavia) were, as it seems, precisely those destined to resume the war against Constantine and the barbarians in Gaul, where all was in disorder.

Accordingly, at Pavia, every danger, everything that went wrong, was laid to the charge of Stilicho, who was then at Bologna.

His object, said these accusers, had been to save the Goths at any cost ; he had purposely left the Rhine frontier undefended, in order that barbarians of his own kind should flood the Empire—as, in fact, they had flooded it. Honorius was in Pavia precisely at that time and a violent riot suddenly broke out there (408). The city was sacked ; Stilicho's friends were put to death ; and the Emperor, whom no one molested, looked on passively, probably knowing beforehand what was to happen.

On hearing of the revolt, Stilicho was about to hasten from Bologna at the head of his barbarian troops to protect Honorius and quell the rebels. But on learning that the Emperor was in no danger, and showed no sign of disapproving the deeds committed under his eyes, he considered it his duty, as a general of the Empire and devoted to its service, to abstain from provoking a sanguinary conflict between one portion of the army and the other. But this scrupulousness caused his own troops to revolt, for they panted to defend their leader and avenge the fate of their comrades. The outbreak was so fierce that the general himself ran great risk of death, and had to take refuge in a church at Ravenna. Then messengers came from Olympius demanding his surrender, solemnly swearing that they were ordered to arrest him, but that his personal safety was assured. However when Stilicho gave himself up on the strength of this pledge, his captors declared that later instructions ordered his death. The few followers clinging to him declared their willingness to fight for him to the last. But he saw that resistance would be useless ; even in that emergency he considered the welfare of the Empire rather than his own safety, and shrank, as a dying man, from provoking civil



war. Accordingly he commanded his men to lay down their arms, and decided to surrender. On the 23rd of August, 408, he quietly laid his head on the block. His son was killed in Rome, his daughter Thermantia was sent back from the Imperial palace to her mother, Serena, who was fated to suffer a very cruel death in Rome shortly afterwards. Most of Stilicho's kinsmen and friends, and, above all, many of his barbarian soldiery, were persecuted to the death, even their wives and children being slaughtered. Then, as though to crown these dark deeds, Honorius published an edict against all heretics, whom he prohibited from joining the Palatine Militia, and proved his bitter dislike for the Pagans by confiscating the property of their temples, and ordering their altars to be cast down.

The first consequence of this terrible tragedy was that a large number of barbarian soldiers, about thirty thousand, it was said, flocked to join Alaric's army, which thus suddenly became more powerful and menacing than before. The question was, what did he propose to do with it? It was impossible that he should dream of overthrowing the Empire, or of mastering it. He had never declared himself its enemy. But, being at the head of an armed multitude that had to be fed, he and his followers were resolved in some way or another, and by some legal and recognised method, to obtain a firm footing in the Empire; for Alaric was quite ready to serve the Empire, and help to re-establish its authority over the rebels in Gaul or elsewhere, taking the rank of *Magister utriusque militiæ*. But the fulfilment of this scheme would have left the Empire at the barbarians' mercy, and to that Honorius would by no means consent. Despite his weak and vacillating temper, he was the son of Theodosius, therefore conscious, in some degree at least, of the dignity of his position, and aware that, should he



concede Alaric's demands, he would find it difficult to resist similar requests later on from other barbarian hordes. Now, too, consent seemed less possible than ever, since the successful revolt against the barbarian party at Pavia, and since Constantine, at the head of his legions, was threatening to detach Gaul, Britain, and Spain from Italy. Such were the great difficulties in the way of any practical solution—difficulties involving the Empire in the gravest peril.

Meanwhile Alaric was continuing his advance through Italy, determined to lay siege to Rome and dictate his own conditions. In fact, as soon as he had seized the mouth of the Tiber and the port of Ostia, the Eternal City, being unprovisioned for a siege and with no army to defend it, was speedily brought to the verge of famine, and likewise assailed by the plague. So Rome was compelled to come to terms; but Alaric's conditions were so hard that the inhabitants, maddened with despair, threatened to issue from the gates *en masse* to fight for their lives. "The thicker the hay, the easier to mow it," the barbarian is supposed to have said, and instead of offering milder terms, his claims grew more exorbitant. "What then will be left to us?" cried the Romans. To this he replied, "Bare life!" Nevertheless, all details regarding this period are so uncertain, and always so exaggerated in one sense or another, that one cannot give full credence to similar anecdotes; especially when we remember that, although a rough and ferocious barbarian, Alaric did not wish to be considered an enemy, much less a destroyer of the Empire. But he had to find sustenance for himself and his men, an armed host in the grip of famine. Therefore Rome was forced to pay a tribute of five thousand pounds in gold, thirty thousand in silver, together with stores of silken stuffs and drugs. In order to satisfy the barbarians' claims the Romans had

to melt down the statues of their ancient gods and the ornaments of their Pagan temples. This was not only a cruel humiliation ; but many declared it to be of evil omen, inasmuch as some Pagans still survived, and even among the Christians there were many who trusted in the help of the idols who had been so long the protecting guardians of Rome.

The minds of men were staggered on beholding the ancient capital of the world reduced to a strait hitherto deemed impossible, but that was, however, to be surpassed by other and more cruel humiliations. It was at this time, it would seem, that the unhappy Serena was put to death, charged, on the strength of being Stilicho's widow, with friendship towards Alaric. It was alleged that this inhuman deed was perpetrated at the instigation of Galla Placidia, the daughter of Theodosius, celebrated for her wonderful beauty. But this princess was little over eighteen years of age at that moment, and although one may easily believe that the sister of Honorius would be hostile to Stilicho and his kin, it is scarcely credible that at so tender an age her mind should have been sufficiently perverted or her influence sufficiently great, to stir the people to an act of revenge.

It cannot be said that Alaric abused his power, even in the hour of triumph. On the contrary, he tried to come to an arrangement by renouncing many of his previous pretensions. He no longer insisted on becoming *Magister utriusque militiæ* ; he was content to accept the province of Noricum for himself and his people, instead of the vaster and more fertile territories he had originally demanded. Honorius, however, hoping that now Arcadius was dead, he would be able to restore harmony, if not union, between the East and the West, and also awaiting the reinforcements he had asked from Theodosius II., rejected all idea of coming to terms. Even the sight of the

devastations committed by hordes of fugitive slaves and disbanded barbarians from the Imperial ranks, could not avail to conquer his obstinacy.

Thereupon Alaric lost patience, and realising that nothing was to be done by negotiation, invested Rome for the second time, and tried to combine with the Pagans and Arians in the city, all of whom were incensed by the recent edicts issued against them by Honorius. Further, he proclaimed a new Emperor in the person of a Greek named Attalus, then Prefect of the City of Rome (409). He expected this man to be the docile instrument of his own will, and hoped to induce him to forward his pretensions with some show of legality. On the contrary, however, no one seemed to take Attalus seriously. Even Honorius, although somewhat alarmed at first and ready to take flight, regained his courage on the arrival of a few thousand men sent to him from Constantinople, and felt sure, with their aid, of being able to hold out safely at Ravenna. Besides, Alaric could conclude no agreement with Attalus, who, being a Greek, naturally shrank from leaving Rome and the Empire a prey to barbarians, although unable to adopt any decided course on his own responsibility. Meanwhile Rome was suffering so greatly from famine that the mob yelled after the Prefect : "*Pone pretium carni humanæ.*" Probably they meant to say, "Must we devour one another?"

Therefore Alaric, being convinced that even Attalus was of no use, finally pronounced him deposed, and stripping him of the Imperial insignia, sent these back to Honorius, with whom he again fruitlessly tried to make terms. It was then that he decided on the most daring act of his life, and one destined to have a dread result of vast importance in the history of the world.

On the 24th of August, 410, either by treason or stratagem, Alaric entered Rome by the Salarian Gate, without

encountering any resistance. It was a novel deed, such as had never happened, never been deemed possible for eight hundred years. Accordingly it excited so much wonder that all were stupefied, and even the Visigoth king seemed so scared by his own act that at the end of three days he hastily evacuated the city. Undoubtedly no barbarian host, practically coming as conquerors, could occupy Rome without committing much violence, much plundering. But from all that can be accurately learnt, we are led to believe that far less violence was perpetrated than might have been supposed, or than was afterwards rumoured. The palace of Sallust, near the Salarian Gate, was immediately burnt down, but there is no certain knowledge of other acts of incendiarism, though probably some occurred. All the anecdotes given in chronicles and legends merely tend to prove the great respect Alaric showed to Christians, Christian churches, above all to the Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul, and to rights of sanctuary. In fact, all who took refuge in consecrated places were left unmolested. Also, outside the churches even, all Christians, especially those vowed to the religious life, or in charge of holy things, were respected by the Goths, in pursuance of the imperative orders issued by their chiefs. Orosius, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome speak with horror of this sack of Rome, but regard it as a just chastisement inflicted by God on the faithless who were still unconverted and looked for aid from their Pagan idols. To those early writers Alaric seems merely an instrument of the Divine wrath, his entry into Rome destined to hasten the triumph of Christianity; they likewise acknowledge that he dealt far less destruction than might have been supposed, and far less than was recounted by many.

Meanwhile Honorius remained shut in Ravenna, where the Pope was also staying, having gone there in vain for

the purpose of trying to negotiate terms between Alaric and the still hesitating Emperor. As an additional proof of Honorius's indifference and sloth, it is related that, on receiving the terrible news that "*Rome has perished*," he thought the message referred to a pet cock of his that he called Rome, so exclaimed in reply, "How can that be possible, when I have just fed him with my own hands?" This anecdote, however, is given by Procopius, who wrote a hundred and fifty years later, and is not always a trustworthy authority when treating of past events.

At any rate it is certain that after three days' halt in Rome, Alaric marched on towards Southern Italy, devastating the land and advanced to Reggio in Calabria. There he made preparations to embark for an unknown destination. Some writers declare that he was bound for Sicily, others, for Africa, since this being the granary of the Empire, he might thus have been enabled to force the latter to arrange tolerable terms with him. In a moment, however, all his schemes were upset. The ships that were to have conveyed him across the straits were all wrecked, while he himself fell ill suddenly and died (410). His followers, we are told, turned the river Busento into another channel, and after burying him in the dry bed, allowed the stream to run over it again, so that no eye might behold the tomb of their valiant chief.



## CHAPTER VII

### FROM THE DEATH OF ALARIC TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE VISIGOTH KINGDOM IN GAUL

ALARIC's decease entirely altered the aspect of affairs. The Goths chose as his successor his brother-in-law Athaulfus, who was still less desirous to oppose the Empire. We have the valuable evidence of Orosius to this effect. This writer relates that he met a comrade of Athaulfus who repeated what he had heard from the chief's lips. Alaric's successor had said: "At first, it was my intention to make myself master of the Empire, and assume the dignity of a Cæsar Augustus, transforming the Roman land into the land of the Goths.<sup>1</sup> But experience soon convinced me that this would be impossible, inasmuch as Rome's domination over the world had been established not only by force, but by law and discipline as well. For the uncontrollable barbarism of the Goths makes them incapable of obeying laws, yet without laws *Respublica non est Respublica*. Therefore I intended, by the armed force of the Goths, to restore the ancient glory of the Roman name. Unable to be the destroyer of the Empire, I wished to regenerate it by peace."

Another fact had doubtlessly conduced to inspire him with these feelings. Alaric had carried off many prisoners

<sup>1</sup> "Esset, ut vulgariter loquar, Gothia quod Romania fuisset, et fieret nunc Athaulfus quod quondam Cæsar Augustus" (vii. 43)

together with his spoils. Among his captives was the celebrated beauty Galla Placidia, born of a race of specially lovely women, who in virtue of their charms, as we have already observed, had a great share in the fate of the world. Her grandmother, Justina, had ruled her husband, Valentinian I. Their daughter Galla won the heart of Theodosius I. Now, Galla Placidia, the offspring of that union, being carried in captivity to Calabria, Athaulfus fell desperately in love with her, and desiring to win her in marriage, was moved to become more and more Roman. It is certain that as soon as he was elected king, Athaulfus forsook the idea of conquering Sicily and Africa and marched his people back to Gaul, where he hoped to find a suitable place of settlement for them, by consent of the Empire with which he desired to establish friendly terms. His idea was, in fact, the same that was always reappearing under different forms, namely, that of bringing about a species of union between the barbarians and Romans, by inducing the latter to accept the Goths as a concomitant part of the Empire, and to use them for its defence. Theodosius, Stilicho, and even Alaric, all cherished this idea; that Athaulfus also should have it was by no means surprising. It is quite true that Honorius had proved restive to it; but at the point which public affairs had now reached even he might be willing to adopt the plan he had previously rejected more than once.

In fact the whole Prefecture of Gaul was in a state of positive chaos, and seemed on the verge of complete separation from the Empire. After Stilicho had withdrawn the legions from the Rhine frontier, the barbarians, as we have noticed, had poured into Gaul in great numbers (406); and then Constantine presently appeared in that country, after having been proclaimed Emperor in Britain. This leader did not succeed in driving back the barbarian

flood, but after seizing the region now known as Alsace-Lorraine, he was, at least, enabled to prevent fresh incursions by occupying many cities of Gaul and subsequently even many Spanish towns, although some parts of both provinces remained in the barbarians' power. The truth was that since Stilicho's death and that of Arcadius in 408, military discipline had been steadily declining. All the generals had become more or less soldiers of fortune ; they often went off separately, each one acting on his own account, and favouring fresh pretenders to the Empire who always received support from some section of the army. Thus, after Constantine's election in Britain, Maximus was proclaimed in Spain. Thus the Prefecture of Gaul harboured two pretenders to the purple, and a vast multitude of barbarians, who sacked the country and exacted heavy fines. Honorius despatched an army to Gaul under the command of Constantius, a valiant leader who made a vigorous effort to re-establish the legitimate Emperor's authority. Then Maximus, being deserted by his followers, took to flight ; Constantine was besieged in Arles, driven to surrender, and, together with his son Julian, handed over to Honorius, who, violating the pledges given by his own general, had both of them killed (411). Thus the two pretenders having disappeared from the scene, there should have been only the barbarians left. The latter, however, had already put forward a new claimant to the Empire in the person of Jovinus, the moment Constantius withdrew to Italy. So they were again raiding the land in every direction.

In this state of things, Honorius could not object to Athaulfus's expedition to Gaul. First of all—and this was the great point—it rid Italy of the Goths. Besides, as Athaulfus went with a declared intention of occupying the country, he would have to fight Jovinus and the barbarians supporting him. This serves, at least partially,

to explain the very curious fact of Athaulfus being able to traverse the whole of Italy from south to north without encountering, as far as we know, any sort of hindrance on the way, and indeed without any details being recorded of his lengthy march. On first entering Gaul (412) he hesitated a while, but then advanced to the attack and killed Sarus, a Visigoth leader in the service of Rome who had gone over to Jovinus. Immediately afterwards Athaulfus marched against Jovinus and his brother; overcame and killed both, and sent their heads to Honorius, who displayed them to the people in Carthage. Shortly before, in that African city, another rebellion had been quelled, which had exercised some indirect influence even in Gaul.

Meanwhile Athaulfus became increasingly enamoured of the fair Galla Placidia and wished to make her his wife. But Honorius detested the idea of yielding to a barbarian the sister and daughter of Emperors, and all the more because his own general Constantius was likewise desperately in love with her, and he would have bestowed her more willingly upon him. Then too, Athaulfus was so very eager to come to an agreement with him, that now, his love-passion notwithstanding, he seemed disposed to send the Princess back to Ravenna, after Honorius had promised to give him plenteous stores of corn, of which his army stood in urgent need. But as the rebellion in Africa prevented the Emperor from fulfilling this promise Athaulfus felt relieved from all obligation to him. Accordingly he presently seized Narbonne, Toulouse, and Bordeaux on his own account, and attempted to capture Marseilles as well, but was frustrated in this purpose by Bonifacius, another brave general in the service of Honorius (413).

What was still more decisive, instead of carrying out his plan of releasing Galla Placidia, Athaulfus made her

his wife in Narbonne, in the month of January, 414. This marriage was a matter of grave historic importance, and so, too, the manner of its celebration ; for on that day the daughter of Theodosius and sister of Honorius, not only gave her hand to a barbarian, but the wedding was solemnised with thoroughly Roman splendour in the house of Ingenuus, a leading citizen of Narbonne. Athaulfus, the barbarian, appeared draped in a Roman tunic. The bride wore a splendid costume of Roman fashion, and at her feet knelt a *cortège* of fifty youths, each holding a salver in either hand, one heaped with gold pieces, the other with jewels and precious things—part of the booty from the sack of Rome—and now offered to her, the most precious of all booty, who was no longer the captive, but the Queen of the Goths. To heighten the solemnity of this curious ceremony, Latin verses were sung. What, too, was stranger still, the director of the chorus was no other than Attalus, that sham Emperor whom Alaric supported for a time but afterwards deposed. He had been compelled to follow the Gothic camp as a hostage to be turned to account when required. Now he led the singers at the wedding of Athaulfus and Galla Placidia ! All this was symbolic of that union between Goths and Romans which, after being the dream and desire of so many, was to be finally realised in some degree by Theodoric. A son named Theodosius was the fruit of the marriage just described, but he died in early infancy.

For different reasons Honorius and Constantius were both highly displeased with what had happened, so they joined in thwarting the Goths in various ways, and particularly by using every possible device to prevent Gaul from being provisioned by sea. Accordingly Athaulfus was induced to cross the Pyrennes into Spain, since that country being rich, fertile, and so far undrained



by invaders, he would find there less difficulty in feeding his army. But an assassin's thrust suddenly put an end to his life in 415. The crime was either one of the acts of vengeance usual to barbarians or the work of the party opposed to the victim's Roman proclivities, and specially angered by the numerous affronts now received from Italy. At any rate the new King elected was Sigeric, who hastened to prove his hatred of Rome and of his predecessor's memory by slaughtering the children born to Athaulfus by his first wife. He dared not kill the widowed Galla Placidia ; but he treated her most harshly, compelling her to march twelve miles on foot among the other prisoners, and in front of his own horse. But his reign soon came to an end, for he was killed in a week. His successor, King Walia, was of gentler fibre, and soon concluding a treaty with Honorius, gave up Galla Placidia to him, together with Attalus—a deed that was rewarded by the gift of 600,000 measures of corn for his host. Honorius then celebrated his eleventh consulship by making a triumphal entry into Rome and bringing Attalus with him bound to his chariot wheels, he then condemned him to have two fingers of his right hand cut off, and relegated him afterwards to the Lipari Isles. Now, too, Galla Placidia, who had shrunk at first from the idea of marrying her faithful lover Constantius because he was a rough soldier whose mind was absorbed in military matters, was finally induced to become his wife. Two children were born of this marriage, first a daughter named Honoria, and before long a son, Valentinian (419), afterwards known as Valentinian III. Constantius was made Honorius's partner in the Empire ; consequently Galla Placidia received the title of Augusta, and later on, after the death of her husband (421) and that of her brother (423), became regent for her infant son.

Meanwhile *Walia* had carried out the pledges he had given by winning several victories over the Vandals and *Alaric* in Spain. He then settled permanently in Gaul with his Goths (419), re-occupying various cities formerly held by *Athaulfus*, including Bordeaux and Toulouse. In fact the name of the latter city was given to the new Visigoth kingdom, now constituted with *Honorius's* consent, and which afterwards extended across the Pyrennes. As we shall presently see, this kingdom played a prominent part in the war the Western Empire was to undertake against the Huns. Narbonne, however, which *Constantius* considered to be an indispensable strategic point for the Romans, and also Marseilles, were retained by them. To the north and the east the land was overrun by other barbarians.

This may be called the finale to the first act of the tragic drama that began when the Huns drove the Goths over the Danube. As soon as Thracia failed to afford sufficient means of subsistence for all of them, a considerable contingent marched off under *Alaric* in search of new lands, and after prolonged wanderings and much fighting finally settled in Gaul. Yet, although this was at last arranged by consent of the Empire, it proved, nevertheless, the preliminary of the final separation from Italy of the whole Prefecture of Gaul. In fact Britain, which formed part of its territories, was already evacuated, and on the point of being subjected to barbarian invasions. Spain, too, was now invaded, and the successive expeditions undertaken for the purpose of reconquering it led to nought, save the temporary success of *Belisarius*. With the exception of a small stretch of territory to the south, the whole of Gaul proper was in barbarian hands, therefore, likewise, destined to be parted from Italy for ever.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GALLA PLACIDIA — INVASION OF AFRICA BY THE VANDALS

AFTER Alaric had marched away from Rome the aspect of affairs there improved. Many citizens who had fled now returned there, and accordingly the population rapidly increased. At Ravenna, on the contrary, seeds of party discord began to sprout up, and an unavoidable crisis was at hand. Honorius jealously clung to his independence of Constantinople, where the traditional feeling of the unity of the Empire was far keener, and where the supremacy of the East over the West was the end constantly kept in view. Theodosius II., who then reigned at Constantinople, although practically under the rule of his sister Pulcheria, had greatly disapproved of the promotion of Constantius to partnership with Honorius. But that warrior died before long, and his widow Placidia, being the child of Theodosius the Great, so strongly desired an agreement with the Eastern Empire, that she found it impossible to remain on good terms with her brother. Accordingly, she repaired to Constantinople, and stayed there till the death of Honorius in 423.

This Emperor was not a man of great ability, but not so worthless as some have declared. He practically represented three ideas, and these typified his reign: the hereditary principle, the Roman idea, and orthodox

Christianity. To these he was always faithful. Weak though he was, he had to struggle perpetually against the barbarians invading the Empire on all sides, and had to contend with numerous pretenders who were always starting up. Theoretically, the whole Western Empire obeyed his rule ; but in reality, Central Europe and all Gaul were already held by barbarian tribes. His policy aggravated, instead of diminishing, the friction with Constantinople. But Placidia, who was sharper-witted than he on that point, opposed his policy. She comprehended that only from Constantinople could help be obtained to stem the invasion of the vast barbarian hordes threatening the Empire in every direction.

This was why Ravenna was split into two parties at the death of Honorius. The party in favour of the independence of the West, chose John, the *Primicerius Notariorum*, as successor to the throne. But the other party, aiming at concord with the East, where Theodosius II. had already assumed the authority of a sole and absolute Emperor, favoured the nomination of Placidia as regent for her son, Valentinian III., in order to maintain the hereditary principle. For this reason also the two best generals in the service of the Western Empire, Bonifacius and Ætius, whose birth and valour had won them the title of the two last of the Romans, were now opposed to each other. Bonifacius, who was in Africa at the time, declared for Placidia, and immediately sent reinforcements and supplies to her aid, whereas Ætius declared for John. All the old bonds of military discipline were now relaxed, and generals took sides according to the dictates of personal interests.

To avoid the appearance of desiring to break off all relations with the East, John had sent to Theodosius II., praying him to recognise his claim ; but learning meanwhile that the Emperor had already declared for Placidia,

he carefully prepared for defence, and even collected a fleet in the port of Ravenna. Before long the news of the very bad reception accorded to his envoys at Constantinople showed that his precautions were more than justified. With no hope of obtaining any soldiers from Gaul, which was occupied almost solely by barbarians, nor from Africa where Bonifacius was in command, and expecting scant assistance even from Italy, where his enemies were many, he despatched Ætius to ask aid from the Huns, among whom that general had gained many friends during his prolonged detention as a hostage. In fact, Ætius soon returned with a force of Huns, said to number 60,000, and arrived in time to encounter the troops sent from Constantinople to Placidia's aid. Fortune seemed to be on his side, for the fleet bearing part of the Eastern army was scattered by a sudden storm, and their general, Ardaburius was cast ashore in the port of Ravenna and made captive. But although a prisoner he managed to brew a conspiracy in the city itself, and established communications with his comrades in arms who were advancing by land, under the command of his son Aspar. Thus, when John was on the point of issuing from Ravenna to make a frontal attack upon the foe, while Ætius and the Huns took them in the rear, Aspar was enabled, through his father's machinations, to enter Ravenna by surprise and capture John himself. The latter was taken to Aquileia, where Placidia had already arrived, and promptly put to death (425). Thereupon Ætius, in spite of having already engaged the foe in a fierce though undecisive skirmish, saw that his cause was lost, and went over to Placidia, who received him with open arms. He induced the Huns to withdraw by paying them a large sum of money, and Bonifacius, being still away in Africa, remained Commander-in-chief at the Court of Ravenna for seventeen years.



Theodosius II. received the news of John's death while attending a performance at the Hippodrome in Constantinople. He immediately ordered the games to be suspended, and led the people to the Basilica to offer solemn thanksgivings to the Lord. He restored to Placidia the title of Augusta, of which Honorius had deprived her, and bestowed that of *nobilissimus* on Valentinian III., while entrusting him to his mother's care, as he was barely six years of age. Later on, he raised him to the rank of "Augustus," sending him at the same time the Imperial purple and diadem. Thus the Empire was again split in two after being united, at least apparently for a time, under the sway of Theodosius II. Now, for a quarter of a century (425-450) Valentinian, or, strictly speaking, Placidia, governed the realm that still bore the name of the Western Empire, although many of its territories were already held by barbarian tribes who gradually proceeded to appropriate other portions, until Italy alone remained in the Emperor's possession.

The antagonism that had always existed between Ætius and Bonifacius grew keener and keener now that both were in the service of Placidia. Equally brave and equally ambitious, Ætius was the craftier of the two; Bonifacius, on the contrary, being extremely excitable and capricious. The latter had served the Empire admirably in Africa by keeping the Moors in check. On the death of his first wife he wished to withdraw from worldly affairs in a fit of religious fervour; but St. Augustine dissuaded him from this purpose for the good of the Empire. Then, taking a second wife, of the Arian persuasion, he entirely changed his mode of life, gave himself up to sensual delights, and so thoroughly neglected the province he governed that it was almost at the mercy of the barbarous African tribes. Things reached such a pitch that St. Augustine sent him stern

letters, reproving him for his neglect: "*Nec aliquid ordinas ut ista calamitas avertatur.*" Accordingly he was recalled to Italy (427), but refused to obey the order; and when an army was sent over to enforce his submission, opposed armed resistance. Thus a sort of civil war was carried on in Africa between the generals of the Western Empire.

We know the legendary account of this affair given by Procopius, who attributes the entire blame of it to Ætius's jealousy of Bonifacius. In order to ruin the latter, Ætius is supposed to have informed Placidia that Bonifacius was betraying her. If she desired proofs, let her summon him to Ravenna and she would find that he would stubbornly refuse to obey. At the same time he is said to have secretly warned Bonifacius that Placidia was plotting to overthrow him, and for that purpose would invite him back to Ravenna. Hence, when the order of recall came, he not only refused obedience but, in revenge decided on the fatal step of inviting the Vandals of Spain to cross over to Africa. But by the time they arrived his friends had made him aware of the trap into which he had been betrayed, and, repenting his blunder, he tried to drive the Vandals back to Spain. But it was now too late, and, after all, he was obliged to return to Ravenna. There he met his rival Ætius in personal combat, and was killed by him. Before drawing his last breath he advised his wife to marry the victor, should the latter be left a widower, inasmuch as Ætius was the only man he deemed worthy to succeed him.

The legendary character of this narrative is visible at first sight, and recalls many other legends of the same sort. In fact, according to one of these, even the invasion of Gaul in 406 was caused by Stilicho's treason, as, later on, the descent of the Longobards into Italy was a mere act of revenge on the part of Narses. The same method is

always followed of attributing events of a general character to exclusively personal motives, and although such motives undoubtedly occur in history, they are not the only factors. The truth is that, at the moment of the African crisis, Ætius was fighting for the Empire in Gaul, so that whatever plots or intrigues were being woven at Ravenna, he could have had no hand in them. In any case, even this explanation is unnecessary, seeing that the outbreak of hostilities between the Roman generals in Africa may have well sufficed to stir the Vandals to invade a country that was the granary of the Empire. Then, too, Africa was not only exposed to revolts of Moorish tribes, but likewise sorely harassed by the heretical sects of the Donatists, who denied the efficacy of baptism when that rite was performed by any priest who had sinned, and also harassed by the so-called *Circumcelliones*, troops of vagabond fanatics who excited the populace. All these sects being persecuted by the edicts against heretics proclaimed by Honorius, and therefore bitterly hostile to orthodox Catholics, naturally sided with all who attacked them, as, for instance, with the Vandals who were bigoted Arians. Thus, without excluding the theory that in the midst of the turmoil caused by civil and religious warfare, the Vandals may have not only received encouragement from some quarters, but have been actually summoned across the sea, there is the very natural explanation that personal interest moved them to invade Africa in 429 and to occupy Mauretania as they advanced towards the East.<sup>1</sup>

The Vandals were closely akin to the Goths, with whom they originally dwelt in the regions between the Elbe and the Vistula. Thence migrating southwards, they took

<sup>1</sup> Everything connected with the coming of the Vandals and of Bonifacius's share in the matter was again carefully sifted by Professor Freeman in the *Historical Review* of July, 1887.

part in the wars of the Marcomanni against Marcus Aurelius. But after this they remained tranquil for a long time, and on such good terms with the Empire that during the reign of Constantine they were received as *fœderati* in Pannonia (Hungary) and settled there for about seventy years. When Stilicho summoned the legions guarding the Rhine to come to his aid in Italy against Alaric, the Vandals, as we have seen, crossed the river together with the Alans and Suevi, and were already in Spain in 409. More than once they came to conflict with the Goths, by whom they were beaten; they were therefore considered to be worth little as fighting men, in addition to their previous bad reputation of being greedier, more perfidious, and more cruel than any other barbarians. For though their manners and customs were more sober than those of other tribes, their fanatical religious zeal urged them to far greater and often ferocious intolerance. In 427 we find them all reunited under the sway of Genseric, who had become their sole chieftain at his brother's death. This leader, lamed by a fall from his horse, was an undersized man of halting speech, but daring, cruel, and quick of resolve. Like all the Vandals he belonged to the Arian sect, but was declared—whether truly or falsely is unknown—to have been converted to this creed from the Catholic faith, in which he was reared, and therefore, like most renegades, to be specially intolerant. After a successful encounter with the Suevi in 428 we find him in Africa the following year. It was a migration as well as an invasion, for he had brought over all the old people, women, and children, and his armed men did not number more than 50,000.

Certainly this force could not have sufficed for conquest had not the country been already weakened by discord, and had there not been a party favourable to the

invaders. Accordingly the Vandals advanced, ravaging the land, demolishing Catholic churches, murdering some of the bishops and priests, and enslaving many others. So rapid was their progress that by the year 430 only three of the principal cities—Cirta, Hippo, and Carthage—remained to the Romans. Bonifacius had now shaken off his lethargy, and when the Vandals advanced to lay siege to Hippo, he gave them battle, but being worsted in the encounter was forced to take refuge in the beleaguered city. The Bishop, St. Augustine, was there and died on the 28th of August, 430, in the third month of the siege, which lasted for eleven more. Then at last came reinforcements from Constantinople under the command of Aspar, whereupon the Vandals struck their camp and marched away. Bonifacius then attacked them in junction with the Byzantines, but again suffered defeat (431). In consequence of this reverse, Africa was left for some time at the mercy of the foe. Aspar returned to Constantinople, and Bonifacius went back to Ravenna, where Placidia, remembering the services he had rendered her when she was opposed by Ætius, whose presumption had now grown unbearable, received him most favourably and with unmistakable marks of preference. Thus there was bitter strife between the two generals, and at last they came to battle near Rimini. According to some authorities Bonifacius was the victor, but received a mortal wound and presently died. According to others Ætius won the victory, seized his rival's possessions, and married his widow, but succumbed before long to a malady that was either brought on or aggravated by the humiliations he had suffered at Court. Hence the legend of the duel between the two generals and the injunctions given by the dying Bonifacius to his wife to bestow her hand on his successful rival.

The state of affairs at Ravenna was by no means satis-



factory. After Bonifacius's defeat in Africa and his subsequent death in Italy, Placidia was at the mercy of Ætius, the only valiant general she possessed. Devoured by ambition, the latter grew more imperious every day. Gaul and Spain were both overrun by barbarians, who were pressing forward from all sides. The Vandals, too, were devastating Africa at their will. Nevertheless, their number was so small compared with the vastness of the country they occupied that they had little hope of being able to withstand successfully an army from Ravenna, that might be easily reinforced from Constantinople. Thus, both sides desired peace, at least for the moment, and in fact a treaty was concluded at Hippo on the 11th of February, 435. The Vandals were allowed to inhabit the regions they had already seized, including a portion of the province of Carthage; but neither the city itself nor the adjacent territory, which were still held by the Romans, to whom tribute was to be paid. But these terms were speedily violated, and in 439 Genseric profited by the war the Romans were waging in Gaul, to take possession of Carthage. Thus, being master of the best ports along the coast, he began to make maritime expeditions to neighbouring islands, and particularly to Sicily, where, from the year 440, he often executed raids. Meanwhile the Empire had to face increased perils in Gaul, and was continually obliged to despatch fresh troops there. Accordingly, in 442, a second treaty of peace was arranged, by which the Romans retained possession of Mauretania and Western Numidia, while the Vandals remained masters of Sicily, of the Pro-consular province of Carthage, Byzacena, and Eastern Numidia. Valentinian III., having attained his majority, had already assumed the reins of government at Ravenna, and since the year 437 had been married to Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius II.

By the treaty of peace of 442 the Vandals were not merely permitted to inhabit the country on the footing of *fœderati*, but had gained the unconditional right of occupying it—a privilege never before granted to any barbarian tribe. This implied a veritable dismemberment of the Empire, the beginning of an entirely new state of things. It should be noted, however, that although the Vandals were believed, and with truth, to be the most cruel of all barbarians, their rule was far less oppressive, especially for the lower classes, than has been usually thought. They chiefly settled in the province of Carthage, remaining gathered together, sharing the lands they had seized and enjoying possession of them without paying taxes. Genseric reserved vast territories for himself in the surrounding provinces. The persons who suffered most were the great landowners, who, despoiled of all their property, were reduced, if they remained in the country, to the condition of stewards, menials, and even sometimes of slaves, compelled to manage or cultivate, for the benefit of the Vandals, lands which were once their own, and were also robbed of their movable property. Their sufferings were shared by the clergy, who had also possessed vast estates, and were always cruelly treated by the Arian Vandals. The field labourers and peasants and city artisans were left more or less in their former condition. Neither was the oppression of the great landed proprietors pushed everywhere to the same excess, but mainly restricted to the province of Carthage. The occupied territory was so vast in extent, that the greater part of it was necessarily exempt not only from oppressive measures but even from the direct action of the new government, which was too rough and primitive compared with that of Rome to be able to enforce fiscal exactions with an equally heavy hand. The other provinces were practically left alone, inasmuch as the Vandals made no

change in the old Roman system of administration, and although very heavily taxed they were less ground down than they had been formerly under the implacably persistent tyranny of the Imperial collectors. Something of the same kind occurred even in Spain and Gaul where the provincial assemblies of headmen were allowed to retain the direction of local affairs. In those countries the Visigoths and Burgundians appropriated two-thirds of the land. But the burden of even this atrocious confiscation was chiefly felt by the great landholders. And although the tyranny exercised by the Vandals in Africa was undoubtedly far more oppressive, it was confined to one portion only of the occupied territory. Nevertheless it stirred the evicted proprietors and all the priesthood to the bitterest animosity against them, for the clergy, even when not dispossessed of their lands, were subjected to persecution from the religious intolerance of the conquerors. Thus the public rancour was kept seething, even among those who had suffered least wrong, and this universal ill-feeling was by no means an insignificant factor in the speedy overthrow of the Vandal power when the Byzantines came to Africa.

That the barbarian tyranny was positively milder than has been usually believed, is confirmed by the testimony of the fifth-century writer Salvianus, who, after stating "that everything in the barbarians, nay, even the very smell of them, was odious to the Romans," was able to add that "nevertheless, they" (the Romans), "and especially those who were poor, found the barbarian tyranny preferable to that of the Empire." "Among the Romans," he says, "the taxes are imposed by assemblies of rich men, who do not pay them, but exact them from the poor. And if, perchance, the taxes be diminished, it is the rich, not the poor, who benefit by the relief. Thus whenever money has to be paid the people must supply it ;

if, on the other hand, the burden of taxation is to be lightened, matters are arranged as if only the rich had borne the burden. Among the Franks, Huns, Vandals, and Goths, similar infamies are unknown.”<sup>1</sup> It should be added, however, that this was not the result of any superior virtue or feeling of justice on the part of the barbarians, but merely a natural consequence of their system of government, which was too rough and imperfect to be able to cover the whole of a conquered country, with a closely woven network of administration from which there was no escape.

During this period Galla Placidia died (November 27, 450) on the verge of her sixtieth year. It cannot be pretended that she was a woman of great intellect, or elevated character; but her shrewdness and strength of will, compared with the incapacity of her son, were judged by many at a higher rate than they deserved. She had maintained her rule for a quarter of a century, almost indeed to the end of her life; and having always leant on the support of the Catholic clergy during a period of fierce religious strife, her memory was naturally revered in the ecclesiastical world. As the daughter of Theodosius, the principle of hereditary right was her main prop, and ensured her the favour of the Byzantine Court. Furthermore, her dazzling beauty gave her great power over men, and enabled her to wield constant and efficacious influence on the politics of her time. Even at this day, all visitors to Ravenna—the one city of Italy and of the world that is rich in fifth century monuments—may behold the many churches erected by Placidia, the beautiful mausoleum in which she was entombed beside Honorius her brother, her husband Constantius, and her son Valentinian. None can look on those wonderful buildings, those gorgeous

<sup>1</sup> Salvianus, “*De Gubernatione Dei*,” bk. v. chap. v. 7, 8.

mosaics, or can hear the various legends recording the memory of the beautiful Princess, without being forced to recognise the leading part she played in the history of Ravenna. Even now her spirit seems to hover over the city.

Nevertheless, partly from the nature of the times, partly as the effect of her own personal qualities, the policy of her Court was a policy of jealousy and intrigue. In spite of the various wars carried on, with signal bravery but scant fortune, both in Africa and in Gaul, the Empire was gradually but surely declining and crumbling to pieces. During her reign, indeed, one province after another began to fall away, until at last Italy was left isolated and forsaken. The death of Placidia consigned the Empire to the feeble and incompetent grasp of her son Valentinian III. at a moment when danger was already threatening and a greater crisis at hand.



## CHAPTER IX

ATTILA AND THE HUNS—THE BATTLE OF CHALONS—  
GENERAL ÆTIUS—POPE LEO I.

As Ranke has told us, the problem offered at that period of European history was the following: Whether the scattered medley of different Latin and Germanic races could be amalgamated and fused together so as to form one single nation and a new form of civilisation? Whether, instead, the one race would necessarily reduce the other to subjection and entirely destroy its individuality? A great and unexpected event, however, helped considerably to draw them together against a common foe.

As we have already noted, the Huns, although of a totally different origin from that of the Latin and Germanic races, had dwelt for half a century in ancient Dacia beyond the Danube. Between them and the Empire lived the Germanic tribes, whom they had pushed towards the West. Later on, Alaric and his Visigoths had poured into Rome by the Porta Salaria; while Vandals, Suevi, and Alans had crossed the Rhine. Nevertheless, for a considerable period the Huns remained on fairly peaceful terms with the Empire, rendering it good service on more than one occasion by sending contingents to fight in its cause, side by side with the Imperial legions. This had helped to give them

some training in Roman discipline, and Attila having taken a few Greeks and Romans into his service, the administration of his public affairs was placed on an orderly footing. At any rate, it is certain that the borders of his kingdom had been widened with extraordinary speed, by the admission of fresh tribes who, although retaining their own chieftains, were dependent upon the king of the Huns, and yielded him ready and devoted obedience. Apparently this process of aggrandisement might be continued *ad infinitum*, so long as the authority of the supreme head should endure. Meanwhile, to use Thierry's expression, the valley of the Danube was so swarming with population that it looked as though some giant ant-heap had been suddenly upset there. These tribes made threatening forays on all sides, and especially on the Imperial territory, so that Theodosius II. had recourse to the favourite Byzantine expedient of paying tribute to Attila to keep him and his tribes quiet. But it had the contrary effect of provoking fresh threats of aggression, for the barbarians continually demanded increased tribute, and failing to obtain it renewed their work of pillage.

In 445 Attila became sole chief of the Huns by the death of his brother Bleda, who was possibly murdered by his command. Thanks to his savage cruelty, Attila is known to history by the name of *Flagellum Dei*. He was an undersized man, with a big head, a flat nose, small eyes, and the yellowish skin of a Tartar; he had a fierce, roving glance, and a certain dignity of bearing that gave him the air of a born leader of men. But he cannot be said to have shown any military genius, seeing that, apart from his numerous raids, massacres, and pillaging expeditions, the only pitched battle he ever delivered resulted in defeat. At some moments he gave evidence of a certain generosity and almost greatness of soul, so far as

could be possible in a barbarian of his stamp. But he undoubtedly possessed a special faculty for organisation and command, seeing how many fresh tribes he brought under his sway, including the Gepidæ, the Alans, the Ostrogoths, and Suevi. Thus was formed one of the vastest kingdoms history has known. According to contemporary writers, in fact, Attila's dominions stretched from Scandinavia to Persia, menaced Persepolis, and was bordered by China on one side and the Roman Empire on the other. Practically, however, this huge kingdom consisted mainly of an agglomeration of independent tribes who had entered into a confederation with him and were prompt to yield him obedience, since it suited him to encourage their lust for war and rapine. In Hungary and Transylvania, however, his sway was absolute and uncontrolled. But having to placate and keep occupied all these restless and ferocious tribes, for no less than nineteen years (434-453) Attila hung like a sword of Damocles over the Eastern and Western Empires, and accordingly both finally united against the common foe.

There was a perpetual interchange of embassies between Attila's Court and those of Constantinople and Ravenna. Fruitless attempts were made to check the growing pretensions of the barbarian chief who directed the movements of such numberless hordes. Even in the year 433 Theodosius had despatched two orators to the Court of the Huns, where both brothers then reigned. The two envoys waited upon Attila, who received them on horseback, so they also remained mounted. The only result of this embassy was that it proved necessary to double the usual tribute, and the amount was paid by the Eastern Empire. But even this was not enough, for a short time afterwards Attila imperiously demanded the church plate of a city he had captured, although it had been already pawned for a large sum. The strangest pretext

for making war, however, was of a different kind. Honoria, sister to Valentinian III., had been detected, at the age of sixteen, in a love intrigue with an under officer of the Ravenna Court, and in punishment was sent off to Constantinople by her mother. The palace there seemed changed into a convent, for Theodosius II. devoted his life to collecting saintly relics and illuminating religious manuscripts. He was still subject to the influence of his sister Pulcheria, who had induced him in 421 to marry Athenais, the daughter of a Greek philosopher, renamed Eudocia on receiving Christian baptism. All members of the Court had to spend their days in prayer and psalm-singing, in visiting the poor and forming processions; so that when the young Honoria arrived she felt as if in prison. Moved by despair, it is said, she then adopted the strange device of sending her signet-ring to Attila, asking him to come to release her and to take her as one of his numerous wives. At first, so ran the tale, Attila regarded the strange offer with the contempt it deserved. Later on, however, when it suited him to quarrel with the Empire, he used the affair as a pretext for demanding not only Honoria's hand, but likewise the inheritance to which he declared her entitled. In the year 447 he had advanced close to the walls of Constantinople and compelled Theodosius to triple the subsidy that Attila styled a tribute. And every year he sent fresh embassies, with added demands and more preposterous claims.

One of these embassies has become specially famous owing to the fact that one of its members has bequeathed us a very minute and authentic account of all that took place. In 448 two envoys appeared at Constantinople—Edecon, believed by some to have been the father of Odovacar, the first barbarian king of Italy, and Orestes, father of Romulus Augustus, the last Emperor of the West. They were the bearers of various demands, and

among others insisted on the surrender of certain fugitive Huns. While this matter was being discussed, one of the Court eunuchs bribed the ambassadors' interpreter Vigilas to make proposals to them for the murder of Attila. Edecon pretended to accept the idea, but only in order to reveal the plot to his lord. Meanwhile, for the better concealment of the sinister design, it was arranged that Attila's envoys should be accompanied back to their own land by Maximinus and Priscus the Sophist, to whom we owe the description of the journey. These two officials, however, were left in total ignorance of the plot that had been woven. So, being deceived themselves, it would be easier for them to deceive Attila. In their train were the seventeen fugitive Huns they were pledged to give up. With these men, and in the company of Edecon, Orestes, and Vigilas, they traversed regions wasted by the ravages of the Huns, where they found human bones and skulls scattered on the ground, and ruined cities only inhabited by a few old men and deserted sick folk. After crossing the Danube they reached Attila's camp just as that chief was returning from a raid. He accepted the gifts they brought; but being roused to fury on finding that only seventeen fugitives had been surrendered to him, sent the interpreter back to demand the others, and invited the envoys from Constantinople to accompany him farther into the country to his own palace, where he would give them his reply.

Accordingly, Maximinus and Priscus pushed on into Hungary, crossing rivers on rough canoes and by raft, and finally reached the capital of the Huns. Here they beheld Attila make his entry in state, preceded by young maidens chanting national songs; and all passed under canopies of cloth held aloft by other girls. The King checked his horse before the dwelling of his chief



minister, whose wife came to the door to offer food and wine to the sovereign, while other persons held a silver table for his use. Attila's palace was merely a capacious log-hut, but had some pretensions to elegance. The dwellings of his various wives stood scattered around it. The only stone building existing there was a bath-house erected by a Roman. One of the most notable incidents of this very strange journey was a conversation that Priscus had with a Greek in the service of the Huns whose dress and manners he had adopted. This man lauded the barbarian life, saying, "In time of peace, one enjoys perfect freedom here. But you Romans are badly off in war and worse off in peace. You call in foreign soldiery to defend the Empire, because your tyrants do not even permit you to bear arms, and you are oppressed by revenue officers, spies, and enormous inequality of fortune, the rich being exempt from fines and taxes, and all the burdens falling on the poor. You have to pay for everything, even for defending your own rights." To which Priscus replied, "That comes from the division of labour and from granting every one due payment for his work. We cannot kill our slaves as you do, but we try to correct them in a paternal way. Your pretended freedom only consists in all being allowed to join in war without any military discipline. We have laws for the preservation of every just right. Even the will of the dead is sacred with us, for all may bequeath their possessions to any one they choose." "Ah, yes!" exclaimed the Greek, bursting into tears, "the Roman laws are good, Roman legislation is excellent; but who executes or respects the laws? Your rulers are no longer worthy of their forefathers, they drive the State to ruin."

After having seen Attila administer summary justice at the door of his palace, the two envoys fell in with the ambassadors from the Western Empire, who told them that

the Hun considered himself master of the world, wished to impose his will on the whole Empire, and thought himself invincible because he imagined that he owned the sword of Mars. A herdsman had found this weapon sticking upright in the earth among the grass, when following the bloody trail of one of his beasts whose hoof had been cut in stumbling over it. At the end of the day the envoys attended a State banquet in the royal palace. Attila sat on a species of couch, behind which a flight of steps led up to his curtained bed-place. His eldest son sat beside him but never spoke, and to the right and left of the couple were Onegesh, the Prime Minister, and a noble Hun. "So even those places were not assigned to us," observed Priscus. Two of the King's sons faced the minister, while the guests were seated round the hall against the wooden wainscot, and after wine had been handed round, food was brought to them on small tables, one for every group of three or four, decked with silver dishes and golden cups. Attila, however, affected great simplicity, ate nothing but meat served on wooden trenchers, and even his drinking goblets were of wood. Contrary to the barbarian fashion the hilt of his sword, which was suspended behind him, his bridle and boot-straps were quite plain and unjewelled. Later on, songs in praise of his prowess were sung amid a storm of enthusiasm. Then buffoons were introduced, one of whom—a Moorish dwarf with a hump and twisted feet—excited the laughter of every one, save Attila, who seemed rather disgusted with him. Although he showed great irritation with regard to the plot that had been designed against him, nevertheless the envoys were able to convince him of their innocence and good faith; for after lengthy negotiations and promises to pay him more money, they finally succeeded in patching up a temporary peace.

In the year 450, however, this state of things came to an end. Theodosius had died of injuries caused by a fall from his horse, and left no male heirs. His wife Eudoxia had been exiled for some years on a charge of infidelity. So his sister Pulcheria succeeded to the throne, in partnership with Marcian, a valiant and elderly soldier, to whom, in the interest of the State, she accorded the title of husband but on condition that he asserted no conjugal rights. His first act of government was to pronounce sentence of death on the eunuch Chrysaphius, who had planned the secret plot against Attila's life. This caused a belief that the new Emperor wished to curry favour with the king of the Huns. But it was speedily seen that he had not the meek temper of Theodosius II., for when Attila next demanded tribute, with the usual threats in case of refusal, Marcian promptly replied, "Gifts to friends, steel to foes." <sup>1</sup> Thus war was now held to be inevitable.

Attila was then at the zenith of his power, and in command of a formidable host, numbering, according to certain authorities, 500,000 men, and 700,000 according to others. All was prepared for the campaign; but whether against the East or the West, was not yet decided. The Eastern Empire lay nearer at hand, but could only be approached across regions which had been repeatedly ravaged, and then the attack must be delivered under the walls of Constantinople, a stronghold capable of offering formidable resistance, especially under Marcian, who was determined to defend it. Besides, a barbarian army such as Attila's, composed of many different races, if not victorious at the first onslaught, might be easily dispersed. The Western Empire on the contrary, though farther away, seemed likely to afford an easy conquest for the Huns.

<sup>1</sup> *Quiescenti munera largiturum, bellum minanti viros et arma obiecturum*" (Prisci, "Fragmenta," xv.).

Ætius was the sole general that Empire possessed, and although a valiant soldier, had always been on good terms with Attila, and often received help from him. Nearly the whole of Gaul was occupied by barbarian tribes at strife with one another. A section of the Franks was already urging the Huns to cross the Rhine. The powerful kingdom of the Visigoths was allied with the Vandals, who promised to second Attila's expedition by invading the shores of Southern Gaul. Pretexts for war never failed him. Accordingly he chose this moment to demand the hand of Honoria, who had sent him her ring, and likewise that portion of the Empire which, in his opinion, should constitute her marriage portion. On receiving the reply that the Princess was already married to another, he said they had disposed of her on purpose to avoid giving her to him, and immediately ordered his army to advance.

Nevertheless, the state of affairs in the West was really very different from what it appeared to be and from what Attila believed. First of all, Theodoric, the king of the Visigoths, a man of remarkable valour, was not adverse to the Romans, but distinctly well disposed towards them. It is true that he had given his daughter in marriage to Genseric's son and was thus united by the bond of blood with the Vandals who were Rome's bitterest foes. But Genseric believing, or feigning to believe, that Theodoric's daughter intended to give him poison, had cut off her ears and nose and sent her back to her father. Thus the former alliance was changed to a mortal enmity, calling, according to the barbarian usage, for desperate and sanguinary revenge.

Ætius had been friendly with the Huns, but he was now in a position similar to that of Stilicho; furthermore, whereas the latter had been a Roman barbarian, he was a Roman who had dwelt long with barbarians.

Hence it could not be supposed, if the Empire were at war with the Huns, that Ætius could hesitate or fail to feel the Roman blood that flowed in his veins. Then there was another argument as well. The Huns were as different from the Germans in race and manners as they were different from the Romans; they were polygamous, Pagan nomads, and their victory would have been the triumph of Oriental barbarism, of Turanians and Tartars over Aryan tribes. It would have been exactly as though the Persians had conquered at Salamis, or—let us say—the Turks at Lepanto. In either case the course of the world's history would have been sensibly changed. Hence the vast historical importance of the coming struggle. Everything now depended on whether the Visigoths were aware of this, and would decide, for the good of civilisation and for their common racial interest, to join with the Romans. In fact, through the mediation of Avitus, an Imperial citizen of great influence, Ætius induced the Visigoths to form a pact of alliance. The decisive clash of arms was rapidly drawing near.

Crossing the Rhine in 451, Attila marched forward, ravaging the land and slaughtering the inhabitants who seemed incapable of any resistance, excepting in a few cities, where the religious spirit was roused to furious reprisals against Pagan barbarities. In fact, after the destruction of Metz and Rheims, St. Geneviève managed to restore the confidence of the inhabitants of Paris (then scantily peopled), and the town escaped destruction by a miracle, it was thought. Orleans, the city that was to be renowned in a later age for its successful defence under Joan of Arc, opposed a stubborn resistance to Attila, thanks to the energy of the Bishop, Anianus, who, on finding that the city was completely invested, hurried off to inform Ætius that it would be impossible to hold out



against so enormous a force beyond the 24th of June. Indeed the walls were almost battered down before the united armies of Theodoric and Ætius came to its relief and compelled Attila to raise the siege and prepare for the great battle that was shortly afterwards fought between Troyes and Châlons sur Marne. The latter city, being unwall'd, might have been easily sacked, but was also saved by the efforts of its Bishop (Lupus), who in some strange and almost wonderful way induced Attila to spare the town. Before the great battle was engaged, the barbarian king followed the usual practice of examining sheep's entrails in search of an omen, and the answer given by the augurs was that the Huns would suffer defeat, but that the enemy's leader would be killed.

This reply filled Attila with anxious doubts ; nevertheless, the two armies at last came to battle (451). The Imperialists arranged their force, with the Alans in the centre, being suspicious of the latter's good faith. The Romans under Ætius formed the right wing, Theodoric and his Visigoths the left. But in Attila's army the King and his Huns formed the centre, the right and left wings being composed of federated subject tribes ; so that the Ostrogoths and Gepidæ confronted the Visigoths. This famous battle was not only of great historic importance, but likewise one of the most terrible ever recorded. Jordanes styles it : "*Bellum atrox, multiplex, immune, pertinax, cui simile nullum narrat antiquitas.*" He also adds that so much blood was shed as to change a neighbouring streamlet into a red and roaring torrent—" *liquore concitatus insolito, torrens factus est cruoris augmento.*" And the wounded could only slake their thirst in this stream ! The Visigoths fought very valiantly, but Theodoric perished on the field. The Huns performed prodigies of daring, and Attila attacked with the fury of a wounded lion. And presently, beginning to despair of success, he

caused saddles to be heaped up as a funeral pyre, intending to seek death in the flames should he be doomed to defeat. Jordanes declared that 162,000 combatants perished that day, without including the 15,000 slain in a previous encounter. Idatius puts the number of killed at 300,000. This serves to prove how great a part imagination played in all such accounts, both at that period and for long after. A legend of later date that has inspired many poets and painters likewise adds that the following night men beheld the souls of the fallen drawn up in battle array in the sky and fiercely renewing the fight. What is certain is that, although the result of the battle was not quite decisive, Attila beat a retreat. Thus, Theodoric having fallen, the prophecy of the augurs seemed actually fulfilled. Undeniably the good fortune of the day was chiefly owing to Ætius, who, besides proving himself an excellent soldier and a master of strategy, had secured for the Empire the alliance of the Visigoths. But his career seemed doomed to resemble that of Stilicho in every particular. In fact, treasonable motives were assigned to him for having neglected to pursue the retreating Huns; it was averred that he did not desire the total destruction of the foe, lest the power of the Visigoths should be thereby too much increased, since, in his opinion, the latter had already played too great a part in the victory. On the contrary, the truth was that the Visigoths, having chosen a successor to Theodoric on the field of battle in the person of Thorismund, their new sovereign, were obliged to hasten to his capital (Toulouse) in order to strengthen his position, which was already contested there. Thus it would have been difficult to attempt another engagement with the Huns. At first, on finding there was no pursuit, Attila dreaded falling into an ambush; but then, taking courage, hastened to cross the Rhine and withdraw to Hungary,

in order to reorganise his army and prepare for fresh campaigns.

Apparently he was then planning an expedition to Rome, for he made a rapid advance towards Italy, and in 452 was already encamped before the walls of Aquileia, which resisted so stubbornly that he was utterly discouraged and on the point of raising the siege. But legend tells us that precisely at that moment he noticed a flight of storks darting away from the city with their young, and this convinced him that no food remained for any one within the walls. He therefore delayed giving the signal for retreat, and shortly afterwards the city surrendered to him and was almost razed to the ground. Altinum, Concordia, and Padua shared the same fate, while other towns only escaped total destruction by opening their gates and meekly submitting to pillage.

These are the events which caused Italians to give Attila the name of *Flagellum Dei*, and drove fugitives from Aquileia and the neighbouring towns to seek refuge in the Venetian lagoons, and found the wonderful town that, in virtue of its history, position, and magical charm, is the one peerless city of the world. Many rivers, such as the Adige, Brenta, Piave, Tagliamento, and Po, flow into the Adriatic at short distances from one another; and as almost all of these, the Po excepted, rapidly descend from the neighbouring mountains, they bring down masses of pebbles and boulders, which, according to their size and weight, are deposited in the sandy bed of the sea at more or less distance from its shores. Thus the Lagoon was first formed, and afterwards the ridge of the Lido, which acts as an outer defence and breakwater to the shallows behind it, where practised pilots are needed to navigate the few channels. Accordingly the Lagoon is practically a great natural fortress safely guarding the

islands scattered over it. It was on those patches of soil that Italian exiles, flying for their lives from the Huns, drove the first piles of the city that was destined, as Hodgkin observes, to become Europe's best shield against the Turks.

There now seemed no possible obstacle to prevent Attila's advance upon Rome. Only, his multitudinous host, that devastated everything on its path and spread desolation on all sides, was beginning to suffer starvation and to be decimated by disease. Ætius was still inactive, it is true, and many blamed his supineness; but his legions might appear at any moment. The Emperor Marcian not only promised to send reinforcements from Constantinople, but seemed disposed to undertake a direct attack on the territories of the Huns. All this naturally caused Attila much uncertainty of mind. Ferocious, barbarian and Pagan as he was, he was likewise prone to superstition. The very name of the Empire impressed him, even as it impressed many other barbarians, with a sense of deep terror, and the death of Alaric was always in his mind. That Christian religion in which he had no faith, but which, nevertheless, from its very nature and the enormous number of its followers, was seen to have so extraordinary an influence over all, compelled even from him a strange, irresistible, instinctive sentiment of reverence. When addressed by men authorised to speak in the name of that religion, he was thrown into confusion and seemed unable to reply. Exactly when his mind was in this state a solemn embassy was announced to him, sent from Rome, and comprising the ex-Consul Avienus and the ex-Prefect Trigetius. But the ambassador-in-chief was no other than the venerated head of the Christian faith—Peter's successor, the representative of God upon earth, Leo I., Bishop of Rome, and perhaps the greatest man of that century. Of Roman birth, his

exalted Christian spirit was interfused with the spirit of ancient Rome. Thanks to the combination of these elements, he was the first to originate and expound a clear conception of the universal Church of Christ as we may still find it set forth in his discourses. "St. Peter and St. Paul," so he said, "are the Romulus and Remus of the New Rome, which is no less superior to the Old than truth is to error. If Ancient Rome was the head of the Pagan world, St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, came to teach in New Rome, so that the light of Christianity might be thence diffused throughout the earth." This conception is continually repeated in his discourses, which are simple, clear, precise, and full of common sense. They are quite free from the empassioned, theological subtlety of the Greeks—have, indeed, no concern with theology. They say little of the Virgin and Saints, but much of Jesus Christ; they enjoin charity and condemn usury. Whenever theological questions had to be faced, he refused to discuss them, but with sure intuition invariably divined which of the contending doctrines was destined to triumph for the good of the Church and the faith, and unhesitatingly proclaimed it. Leo was not only of great intellect, but, above all, of lofty character. His marvellous energy and immutable strength of will were proved by the way in which, amid all the disorder and tumultuous agitation of the period, he maintained the unity and authority of the Church of Rome as founded by St. Peter, who alone had received from God the power to bind and to loose, and alone transmitted that power to his successors. He was determined to rally all Christendom round the Church. "The royal and the ecclesiastical power must," he declared, "act in concert. The first appertains to the Empire for the ruling of nations and the defence of the Church, to whom is entrusted the care of souls. Rejoice, O Rome! celebrate



the birth of St. Peter and St. Paul, by whom thou hast been converted from a teacher of error into a disciple of truth, and placed at the head of the world, to attain to higher dignity by the aid of religion." These ideas not only permeate his discourses and his writings, but likewise inspired his whole life, and, by giving shape and substance to his character, raised him above the level of all his contemporaries.

The great aim of Leo's life was to bring not only the bishops of the West, but likewise those of the Eastern Church, into subjection to the authority of the Pope, as Head of the Roman Church. It is quite true that from the moment when the Council of Sardica (344) submitted the Eastern question regarding the deposition of Athanasius to the decision of Rome, the Popes had always endeavoured, on the strength of that instance, to establish a general principle in favour of the supreme authority of the Roman Church. But Leo I. dedicated his life to the task of obtaining the recognition of this principle and carrying it into effect. He succeeded in this to a certain extent, for he installed a Macedonian Bishop in his See in the name of St. Peter, which implied the extension of his ecclesiastical authority over the whole Prefecture of Illyricum, including the portion of it that belonged to the Eastern Empire. He thus prepared for the future by treading the road that was to be invariably followed by his successors until the desired aim was reached of making Rome the capital of the Universal Church. It is extremely curious to note how the essential germ of the whole subsequent history of the Papacy already lay hidden in the lofty mind and strong purpose of this great prelate, and how it slowly developed in after ages.

This was the man who, inspired by the invulnerable faith that knows no fear, appeared before Attila, at the head of the Embassy from Rome, and as the true representative

of the Eternal City, the living personification of the Universal Church and the only true faith, with the fixed persuasion that all, whether willingly or unwillingly, must yield obedience to the Church. The meeting took place near Peschiera, in the summer of 452. No one knows what the Pope said to Attila. At any rate after that colloquy, to the general amazement, the Hun beat a retreat. Whether he was impelled to this decision by the Papal words of authority, or by the general state of affairs, and the difficulties in which his army was then involved, it is quite impossible to say.

A legend was built up on this incident, in which the whole merit of it was accorded to Leo I. In allusion to him and to the Bishop Lupus who had prevented the sacking of Troyes, Attila is alleged to have exclaimed, "I can conquer men, but a lion and a wolf have succeeded in vanquishing the conqueror." Another legend has been immortalised by Raphael's brush, who in the halls of the Vatican has depicted Attila as terror-stricken, and the spectacle of the Pope quickly riding towards him and warning him to retreat, with St. Peter and St. Paul hovering in the air above Leo, brandishing flaming swords. But a fresh event occurred to increase the mysterious significance of Attila's strange withdrawal. Within a short time the barbarian king took to himself a new wife, celebrated his nuptials by a grand banquet, and a few hours later died of hæmorrhage. On the same night the Emperor Marcian announced that in his dreams he had beheld Attila's bow snapped in twain. The Huns laid the body of their hero under a tent in the great Hungarian plain, and slashed their faces with their swords that blood instead of tears might be shed for him. Meanwhile a squadron of horsemen circled rapidly round the tent, singing national songs in praise of the dead, and deploring that instead of falling in battle, he should have perished

in the midst of joy and delight, so that his death could not be avenged.<sup>1</sup> Attila was always regarded by Italians as "The Scourge of God," and all their legends depict him in that light. On the other hand, all the Hungarian, Scandinavian, and even Teuton legends are eulogies on his mighty deeds. After his sudden death his enormous kingdom broke up and melted away as quickly as it had been formed.

If the embassy headed by Pope Leo was the first visible proof of the enormous moral force the Papacy was beginning to wield, the pitched encounter with the Huns, called the battle of Chalôns (though fought many miles from that city), was justly considered as the last heroic deed of the Roman Empire. The merit of the victory being attributed to Ætius, this general was honoured as the saviour of the Empire, although he afterwards made no move to check the Huns' advance into Italy. He was certainly a great captain, of rare strategical skill and of extraordinary physical strength. Thus he was never tired of work, on which, indeed, his energy seemed to thrive, as one reads in his panegyric. But, the great luck that attended him and the eminent services he had rendered to the Empire swelled his ambition to so high a pitch, that he tried to play the tyrant in all things and became more and more obnoxious to Valentinian III., who, having no sons of his own, had promised him his daughter's hand. Now, however, that the Huns no longer inspired fear, the Emperor grew haughty, intolerant, and always deferred the fulfilment of his promise. Thereupon Ætius pressed his claim with such excessive arrogance, that Valentinian determined to get rid

<sup>1</sup> Jordanes gives a summary of the funeral songs in these terms: "Non vulnere hostium non fraude snorum, sed gente incolumi, inter gaudia lætus, sine sensu doloris occubuit. Quis ergo hunc dicat exitum, quem nullus æstimat vindicandum?"

of him in the same way that Honorius had rid himself of Stilicho. Towards the close of 454 he invited the general to his palace in Rome, and when the latter again demanded his promised bride, Valentinian attacked and wounded him with his own hands, and summoning the cut-throats placed in hiding, had him promptly dispatched. Procopius relates that the Emperor having asked a Roman whether he had done well or ill in ridding himself of Ætius, received the following answer: "Whether it be well or ill I know not; but it is certain that with your left hand you have lopped off your right;" and the saying came true.

The following year Valentinian was murdered while witnessing athletic games in the Campus Martius, by two soldiers who had sworn to avenge their general, and also killed Heraclius the Eunuch, who had planned the treacherous attack upon Ætius, and acted as Olympius had acted towards Stilicho. By the death of Valentinian the Theodosian dynasty became extinct, after ruling the East for seventy-four years (379-453), and the West for sixty-one (394-455). Thus the Empire now entered on a new epoch, which was, practically, the beginning of the end. There were already signs of the decay into which it was rapidly falling, and the plainest sign of all was the extraordinary political power assumed by women on the one hand and military leaders on the other. In fact, after the death of Arcadius, Pulcheria had been ruler of the Empire, had changed the Court into a convent, and then taken as her partner the brave soldier Marcian. The Western Empire had been long ruled by Placidia; it was under her sway that Bonifacius and Ætius had attained so much power, and the second of these—his rival departed—became omnipotent until treacherously put to death. On the extinction of the Theodosian line many more generals of the type of soldiers of fortune started

up in the Western Empire and hastened the rapidity of its fall. Now that the throne lay vacant, the Vandals pressed forward in menacing array ; they made continual forays in Sicily, Corsica, Calabria, and even farther on, without any one having the strength to resist their incursions.



## CHAPTER X

THE EMPEROR MAXIMUS—SACK OF ROME BY THE  
VANDALS—RICIMER, ORESTES, AND AUGUSTULUS

IN March, 455, the Roman Senator, Petronius Maximus, ex-Consul and Prefect was elected Emperor. He was about sixty years of age, and being considered an opponent of the Theodosian dynasty was unwelcome to the majority. The ill-feeling against him was heightened by the fact of his immediately according protection to both the murderers of Valentinian III., thus rousing a suspicion that he had been privy to the crime that had raised him to the throne. In addition to this, he tried to compel Valentinian's widow, Eudoxia, to marry him by force. This Princess was only thirty-four years of age; she was the daughter of Theodosius II., and most unwilling to give her hand to an old man accused of having had a share in her husband's murder. As usual a legend was built up on these facts to the effect that in revenge she was responsible for the coming of the Vandals, who now invaded Italy, took Rome by assault, and put it to the sack. But this account, of which Procopius is the author, is ignored by contemporary writers, or barely mentioned by one or two of them as an idle rumour. The interval between the supposed summons and the actual entry of the Vandals is too short to give any weight to this legend. As contrary evidence, there is the fact that the invaders,

instead of sparing Eudoxia, led her captive to Africa together with her two daughters. In any case no artificial reasons are needed to explain why the Vandals, after their numerous raids on the southern shores of Italy, should have been tempted to advance on Rome, which was then in a state of anarchy, utterly defenceless, and incapable of the slightest resistance. The Vandals, having increased their forces by joining with the Moorish tribes of Africa, had started piratical expeditions which made them the terror of the whole Mediterranean coast, while their savage atrocities were magnified by tradition. One of the rumours spread was that whenever they failed to capture a city at first assault, they slaughtered all the inhabitants of its territory and piled up their corpses against the walls, in order to cause an outbreak of plague, and thus drive the citizens to surrender. As if the besiegers would not have been the first to suffer in that event! It is certain, however, that they destroyed all the churches, slaughtered and took prisoners all prelates and bishops, and frequently reduced them to slavery. Hence the origin of the well-known term, *Vandalism*.

It may be therefore easily imagined that when the Vandals were known to have reached the mouth of the Tiber, all Rome was seized with panic, for the Emperor Maximus had made no attempt whatever to fortify the walls. The only thing that occurred to him was to proclaim that every one was permitted to leave the city, and he too made ready for flight. But his cowardice stirred the Roman people to such a pitch of indignation, that a violent rebellion broke out. The Emperor was killed, his body torn to pieces, and after being paraded through the streets with ferocious yells of imprecation, the bleeding remains were cast into the Tiber. Meanwhile Rome had no Emperor, no government, and no means of defence against the swiftly advancing barbarian horde. All was

disorder and anarchy. There were adherents of the Theodosian dynasty cursing the election of Maximus ; Pagans appealing to their ancient gods ; Christians horrified by such a spectacle, prophesying the coming vengeance of the Lord ; barbarian men-at-arms who, being of the Arian creed, instead of preparing for defence, waited to see what their fellow Arians the Vandals would do.

In all this dreadful disorder only one voice was raised in accents of lofty faith and resolve, and again it was the voice of Pope Leo I. In a very celebrated discourse of his, given on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, he exclaimed, " It is humiliating to confess, but cannot be denied, that more appeals are now addressed to demons and idols than to the Apostles, and greater interest is shown in novel spectacles than in the Blessed Martyrs. But which will better protect and save this City, games at the Circus or faith in the Saints ? Return unto the Lord, and hearken unto the marvels He hath wrought for us, and acknowledge that our liberty is due not to the influence of the planets, as the impious pretend, but to the mercy of the Almighty Lord who hath deigned to soften the hearts of raging barbarians." This discourse, held by some (Papencordt, &c.) to have special reference to the coming of the Vandals, and by others (Baronius and Milman) to the Hunnish invasion, undoubtedly shows what was the state of feeling in Rome in the middle of the fifth century and what was the attitude of the Pope. On this occasion, likewise, Leo I. was the only man who ventured to leave the city and face the barbarians ; but his interview with Genseric could not achieve the same result as his former conference with Attila. The Vandals, in junction with the still more savage Moors, were already close to the Eternal City and thirsting for plunder and bloodshed. Nevertheless,

it was promised to the Pope that no Christian churches should be burnt and that the lives of non-combatants should be spared.

A few days after the murder of Maximus the Vandals entered Rome (June, 455), aided, it would seem, by the treasonable act of an Arian barbarian, who showed them the easiest way to get in. The sacking of the city went on for fourteen days; all the valuable contents of the Imperial palace and of the Pagan temples were put on board galleys and carried away—gold, silver, precious stones, together with numerous Greek and Roman statues. Campania was pillaged in the same fashion. Even the venerated sacred vessels from the Temple at Jerusalem, which had been brought to Rome in triumph and are still recorded in the sculptures on the Arch of Titus, were likewise carried off oversea. Although the truth of this robbery has been doubted, we find it confirmed by Procopius, who subsequently related that Belisarius captured this sacred spoil from the Vandals in Africa and transported it to Constantinople. Nevertheless, it is certain that some of the accounts of the wholesale devastation of Rome by the Vandals must have been exaggerated, seeing that after the barbarians' departure the city still possessed many fine churches and monuments. But it is equally certain that since the days of Brennus no such destruction and havoc had ever been inflicted on Rome. In addition to all the treasures, jewels, and works of art, the Vandals carried off crowds of prisoners, most of whom were made slaves. Among the captives, together with many priests and monks, the Empress Eudoxia and her daughters Eudocia and Placida were also carried off. Genseric afterwards married the elder princess to his son Huneric, thus blending Vandalic with Imperial blood; the younger one, on the contrary, was kept with her mother in honourable confinement for the space of seven

years, and then at last given up to the Emperor Leo at Constantinople, who had long demanded their release. All the rest of the captives were allotted as slaves to their conquerors, children separated from their parents, husbands from their wives. The only alleviation to their cruel sufferings came from the truly heroic charity of Bishop Deogratias of Carthage. He converted his churches there into hospitals for sick prisoners, sold the sacred vessels of gold and silver ornaments in order to ransom slaves and reunite scattered families. His own special church became the general infirmary, and notwithstanding his advanced age, he tended the sick night and day until he died of overwork and exhaustion. Then his devoted congregation gave him pious burial in a secret place to preserve his remains from barbarian insult. Thus in the terrible overthrow of the Roman world the only examples of human heroism and dignity were those given by the representatives of the Church and religion. Although the fall of ancient Rome certainly dates from its sack by the Vandals, the new Rome then began to arise and furnish proofs of a different but no less admirable greatness. The splendour of the Capitol had faded away, that of the Vatican had dawned.

So great was the consternation in which Italy was plunged when the Vandal invaders had departed, that for some months no steps were taken to elect another Emperor. The first person to think of it was Theodoric II., the king of the Visigoths, who, with the support of the Roman legions and Gallo-Roman nobles gathered at Arles, promoted the election of Avitus, who assumed the purple in July, 455. This Emperor was a nobleman of Auvergne, who had fought bravely under Ætius, and assisted the latter to conclude the alliance with the Visigoths against Attila. But as his election proved the predominance of provincial and barbarian



votes, it was viewed with small favour by Rome and the Senate, although approved by Constantinople.

The greatest danger for the whole of the West now proceeded from the Vandals; accordingly Avitus despatched an army led by their bitter enemy, the valiant Ricimer, son of a Suevic father and a Goth mother, who immediately began operations against the foe. In 456 he achieved a signal victory either in Sardinian or Corsican waters, according to various authorities, although in reality the fight seems to have been carried on off both islands. This triumph rendered Ricimer more powerful than the Emperor himself. Then all at once he found himself placed in a similar position to that of Stilicho and Ætius. But, taking warning from the lessons of the past, he resolved to avoid his predecessors' fate, and instead of allowing emperors to get rid of him, proposed to rid himself of them whenever they gave signs of becoming dangerous. Therefore one after another he sent four emperors out of the world, replacing them by creatures of his own eventually destined to the same fate. Thus was accomplished the total destruction of the Western Empire, which, thanks to the method employed by Ricimer, passed completely into barbarian hands. This success was achieved not only by the fact of a barbarian general making and unmaking emperors at his pleasure, but also because he allowed many months to elapse between the decease of one sovereign and the election of another, so that the Western throne often remained vacant for a considerable time. These long interregnums helped to persuade the world that real emperors might be easily dispensed with and replaced by barbarian rulers, as subsequently occurred when Odovacar formally assumed the crown in his own name.

Avitus was the first to suffer the hard fate reserved by Ricimer for candidates of his own choice; for when

this Emperor realised that Rome was against him and the barbarian general the real master there, he felt that all foothold failed him, and proposed going to Gaul, where his election had been carried, for the purpose of collecting an army there to escort him back to Italy and strengthen his position on the throne. This scheme, however, only intensified the antipathy of the Romans, who naturally disliked the idea of their Emperor marking his distrust of the capital by seeking aid from the provinces. Accordingly, in October, 456, Ricimer was enabled to seize his person at Piacenza, and afterwards compelled him to assume the tonsure and become a bishop. Thus the Imperial power remained in his own grasp until it might suit him to nominate a successor to the throne.

Almost at the same time a similar state of affairs was reproduced at Constantinople, but with opposite results. Even in the East the last vestige of the Theodosian line was extinguished when Marcian passed away. There, too, all real power was in the hands of a barbarian, *i.e.*, of the Arian general Aspar, commander of the Gothic soldiery. Nevertheless he forwarded the election of Emperor Leo I., a brave Dacian warrior of the orthodox faith, who was acclaimed by the army on the 7th of February, 457. On assuming the purple he was anointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople—a hitherto unpractised rite. Possibly it may have been performed to compensate for the lack of any hereditary title to the throne. As the proclamation by the army seemed insufficient of itself, the Church was endued with an authority she had never before enjoyed, but which she turned to marvellous account in after times. Meanwhile the new Emperor reaped advantage from it, and soon proved himself better fitted to sweep others from his path than to be swept aside himself.

Therefore, seeing that Italy had been left without an

Emperor from 456 to the early months of 457, he suggested the election of Julius Valerius Majorianus. He too had served bravely under Ætius, and was the friend of Ricimer, and after having won distinction in the latter's campaign against the Vandals, had assisted him to depose Avitus, and had been rewarded by the post of *Magister Militum*, or Master of the Soldiery. Leo's suggestion of electing him Emperor of the West was favourably received, not so much by Ricimer, who indeed only seconded Leo's views from motives of prudence, as by the Roman people and Senate, who, after a foreign Emperor such as Avitus, were rejoiced to accept one they regarded as a fellow-countryman. Accordingly Majorianus assumed the Imperial purple near Ravenna on the 1st of April, and immediately addressed an epistle to the Senate, declaring in terms instinct with the spirit of ancient Rome, that justice, virtue, and loyalty should triumph under his rule. This promise he did his utmost to fulfil. He tried to relieve the provinces from over-taxation, and above all from the arbitrary fiscal exactions which rendered the burden so insupportable; and all his laws were dictated by the same nobility of feeling. He was aware that he had been raised to the throne for military rather than political ends; hence, with the support of the Senate and people of Rome, he began to rule the provinces with a firm hand, especially where he had to deal with the Visigoths, whom he attacked very vigorously during a campaign he made in Gaul.

But the Vandals were still the dominant danger. Majorianus spent three whole years in preparing to make war on them in the joint interest of the East and the West, carefully gathering a mighty army, further increased by reinforcements from Constantinople. With the intention of marching through Spain and crossing thence to Africa, he collected a fleet of three hundred

vessels. But unexpected difficulties arose. Ricimer seemed disposed to look on idly, without giving any help, while the Spanish Visigoths showed decided hostility. Genseric, who was still a threatening power, ravaged the African coast to prevent his enemy from obtaining supplies, and even poisoned the wells. What was far worse, he contrived, by means of treason and stratagem, to capture part of the Emperor's fleet and destroy the rest of it. Had Majorianus succeeded in this campaign against the Vandals, it is certain that he would have gained enormous power, and could have entirely overthrown Ricimer's authority. But, instead, the contrary result occurred; he was defeated, and had to beat an ignominious retreat. While retiring through Gaul, he was gradually deserted by all his allies. After crossing the Alps with only his own troop of guards, on the 2nd of August, 461, he was attacked, defeated, and killed at Tortona, by Ricimer's soldiery, and thus the barbarian general was again sole master of Italy.

In the month of November Ricimer caused Libius Severus to be chosen Emperor. The latter remained four years on the throne; but history has nothing to say about him, inasmuch as Ricimer seems to have ruled during that time. Meanwhile Genseric, who had never forgotten the defeat he had suffered from him in 456, was trying to stir Leo I. against him, in the hope of creating a rupture between the two Emperors, and thus being enabled to get a creature of his own elected to the throne of the West. To this end he had already released Eudoxia and her daughter, and sent them back to Constantinople. But Ricimer was his equal in cunning, and when, after the death of Severus (November, 465), the throne of Italy lay vacant for eighteen months, and Leo I. expressed his wish that Procopius Anthemius should be chosen, Ricimer,

seeing his own advantage in it, had him promptly elected (467) and shortly afterwards took his daughter to wife.

Thus the East and the West were again close allies, and jointly started great preparations for war, in order to make an end of the Vandals. It is recorded that Constantinople collected 130,000 pounds' weight of gold, and that a fleet of a thousand ships carrying 100,000 men, was despatched during the spring of 468. Nevertheless this carefully prepared enterprise was seriously hindered by the hostile attitude of the two barbarian leaders, one of whom was omnipotent in Rome and the other in Constantinople. Both generals feared that a victorious campaign would seriously injure their position by augmenting the two Emperors' power. Accordingly, by dint of obstruction, Ricimer contrived that Anthemius should contribute a very small force to the war while he, in his turn, was putting every possible obstacle in the way of the campaign. With this evil purpose, he supported the unlucky plan of entrusting the direction of the war to Basiliscus, who was utterly incompetent, but was proposed as commander by his sister the Empress Verina. Therefore, in spite of the distinguished valour and preponderating numbers of the Roman forces, the campaign was ruined by the inexplicable blunders committed by the generals, and above all by Basiliscus, the commander-in-chief. The public voice declared both Aspar and Ricimer guilty of treason, more especially the latter, since he, it was said, had prevented reinforcements from being sent to Africa at a critical moment when they were absolutely needed to secure success.

This disastrous war led to many serious results. The arrogance of the Vandals was swelled to excess, while it took the East many years to replace the vast sums it had lost ; but what was of still more importance, the relations between Leo I. and Aspar became so strained that an open



rupture was unavoidable. For some time past Aspar's insolence had been growing always more unbearable. He had exacted a promise that one of his sons should be raised to partnership with the Emperor in the government, and repeatedly demanded the fulfilment of this promise with most disrespectful urgency. The people hated him as an Arian, and regarded his pretensions with the strongest aversion. He afterwards adopted a vicious mode of life, and, as we have already seen, it was by his fault that the safety of the Empire was so gravely imperilled in the last Vandal war. It may be also added that he had neither the courage nor daring of Count Ricimer, that Leo I. refused to become a passive tool in the hands of his general, and that the barbarians could never hope to attain in the East the same power they had achieved in the West. The Emperor knew this, and admitted into his army a larger force of brave and hardy Isaurians from the Taurus Mountains. By this means he was able to put a check on the insolence of the Goths and other Teuton soldiery; so, when the right hour seemed to have struck, in 471, he made use of his mountaineer forces and their chief Tarasicodissas—who afterwards succeeded him on the throne as the Emperor Zeno—to compass the death of Aspar. He likewise ordained the murder of the general's three sons; but as one of them had fled, and the second recovered from his wounds, only the third was killed. These deeds gained Leo I. the nickname of *Macellus*. Nevertheless he had rid himself of an inconvenient and dangerous master and delivered the Empire from the tyranny of the Goths and their fellows.

In Italy matters came to a very different end. The discord between Ricimer and the Emperor Anthemius grew worse from day to day, and the latter made public complaint of having been forced to marry his daughter to

a barbarian who still wore the skins of wild beasts. Hence conflict was unavoidable even here, although in this case the barbarian general was the stronger and keener-witted of the two. Ricimer was in command at Milan, and in 472 he advanced with his army to lay siege to Rome, where Anthemius was then resident, and still supported by a portion of the citizens. Among the besiegers was a certain Roman named Olybrius, whom Ricimer intended to raise to the throne after deposing Anthemius. Thus a general of the Empire was seen to play the part of an Alaric, by investing the Eternal City, when the Emperor himself was within the walls. After a siege of some months Rome was driven to surrender by famine and treason combined, and Ricimer entered the gates. Anthemius was murdered on the 11th of July, 472, but soon after (August 18th) his victorious foe died of hæmorrhage, and Olybrius followed him to the tomb on the 23rd of October. So ended the lengthy, confused, and painful drama of Count Ricimer; but nevertheless it had a sequel in the shape of a brief string of events of much the same kind as those we have described. For sixteen years Ricimer had been the master of Italy, and placed it, by his action, at the mercy of the barbarians. That indeed constitutes his real character in history. He was the precursor of Odovacar and Theodoric, who were now about to step upon the stage; was almost the connecting link between them and the generals Stilicho and Ætius. During his life Italy had become accustomed to see all real authority vested in a barbarian, and often without even the ghost of an Emperor to exercise even nominal power. But the country was not only given up into barbarian hands, but gradually became so entirely separated from Africa, Spain, and Gaul, as to form a new political unit. The various elements of which the Empire was still constituted, *i.e.*, the army, the government of

Constantinople and that of Ravenna, finally clashed together, and, bringing one epoch to a close, inaugurated a fresh period.

There seemed a probability that Ricimer's peculiar position, with exactly the same degree of power, would be inherited by his own nephew Gundobald, a Burgundian warrior, who had come to Italy to seek his fortune with his uncle's help ; for after leaving the Western throne vacant for five months, Gundobald compassed the nomination of Glycerius, the *Comes domesticorum* (Master of the Household Guard), who was proclaimed Emperor at Ravenna on the 5th of March, 473. But at this moment the quarrel with Constantinople came to a head, for the Eastern Emperor, Leo I., being near unto death, his meddlesome wife, Verina, caused her kinsman, Julius Nepos, to be named Emperor of the West, although he remained in Constantinople to the middle of 474. Then he went to Italy and was proclaimed Emperor on the 24th of June in the same year, while Gundobald disappeared from the scene, probably to take the place of his now deceased father, the Burgundian king. Glycerius vanished also, but in what manner is unrecorded. The only authentic information we have is that he was forced to accept consecration as a bishop in Dalmatia, and that soon afterwards he died.

Regarding the reign of Julius Nepos, very few details are known, although it represented the end of an historical period. This Emperor, being forced upon Italy by the party that had routed the barbarians in Constantinople, was by no means well received by the Italian legions, which were chiefly composed of barbarian soldiers and had carried the election of Glycerius. The peace concluded with the Visigoths of Gaul was the most notable event of Julius's reign. By the terms of this treaty, in order to save Italy from war, he ceded Auvergne to those

barbarians of the Arian sect, although that province had made a successful resistance and wished to remain united to the Empire. This act of his robbed him of the Romans' esteem, without enabling him to regain that of the barbarians which he had already forfeited. Thus the public discontent grew apace, and finally culminated in another rebellion, that—perhaps by the natural force of things—was headed by Orestes. The Eastern Empire being then plunged in disorder, this leader found it easy to overthrow Julius Nepos, and attacking him at Ravenna, drove him to seek refuge at Salona, in August, 475. This was the same Dalmatian city in which the ex-Emperor Glycerius had been compelled to assume the episcopal mitre, and he was probably still living when his fugitive successor arrived there.

Orestes is the last of the series of generals who, during many years, made and unmade emperors at their will, and held the Imperial power in their grasp, until they finally yielded it to the barbarians alone. Orestes was the instrument of this decisive change. A native of Illyricum he was of Roman origin, and so, too, his wife. But he had dwelt a long time at the Hunnish Court, and, as we already know, Attila had sent him on an embassy to Constantinople. Thus he had become even more closely assimilated with the barbarians; and this may have been the reason why, grasping the supreme power as his barbarian predecessors had done, he, too, was afraid to assume the robes of Empire. Nevertheless he dared to accomplish the design that Stilicho and Ætius had long nourished in vain; for he contrived that his own son should be elected Emperor. This son had never lived among the barbarians, and was more Roman than himself on the maternal side. On account of his extreme youth, his name of Romulus Augustus was altered to the somewhat contemptuous one of Romulus Augustulus. So, by

the irony of fate, he who was to be the last Emperor of the West, bore the name of the first King and first Emperor of Rome.

It might have been supposed that Orestes being in command of the army, and the father of an Emperor who was still a minor, would have felt that his own position was assured, especially since Genseric, now an aged man, had consented to conclude a treaty of peace with Ravenna and Constantinople that preserved both the East and the West from Vandal attacks for the space of two generations. On the contrary, however, a germ of weakness lay concealed in that which appeared to be a source of strength. Roman and barbarian qualities could not easily coalesce ; the one element or the other was bound to be stamped out. In Stilicho's case, as we have seen, the barbarian succumbed to the Roman element ; in that of Orestes the contrary occurred, owing to the difference of the times. The army under his command was composed of various tribes : Turcilingi, Scyri, and Heruli, all differing but little from the Goths. The number of these barbarians had gone on increasing from the first by continual small additions ; and now that they formed the whole Imperial army in Italy, they wished to settle permanently in the country, and thus gain certain means of subsistence there in peace as well as war, as was already the case in other Western provinces of the Empire. Accordingly they demanded one-third of the land. Hence the conflict arose that was to bring Orestes to ruin. Cession of territory implied the permanent establishment of the barbarians in Italy, and consequently Italy would be at their mercy. Orestes, being of Roman origin and Roman in feeling, could not decide in favour of this step, and indeed deliberately opposed it. Thereupon the soldiers rose in rebellion, and deserting him, proclaimed Odovacar in his stead, by raising him on the



shield (August 23, 476). Odovacar was a barbarian officer of Ricimer's army, and had fought under that chief at the siege of Rome. He promised to grant the soldiery all they had asked and been denied. Orestes took refuge in Pavia, but being pursued thither by his rival, barely escaped with his life. The city was captured, put to the sack for two whole days, and the barbarians only ceased from slaughter on learning that Orestes had been overtaken and killed at Piacenza on the 28th of August, 476. This tragedy has many points of resemblance with Stilicho's death-scene in the same city during the year 408. The cry then, however, was: "Death to the barbarian!" now it was, "Death to the Roman!"

Odovacar hastened to Ravenna, where he found the trembling boy, Augustulus, the last representative of Roman imperialism. He spared his life, but relegated him to the Palace of Lucullus, at Pizzofalcone, near the old city of Naples,<sup>1</sup> with a pension of six thousand solidi. There the deposed ruler lived quietly, though for how long a period is unknown, and endeavoured, as we shall presently see, to promote Odovacar's success. Genseric's death occurred shortly afterwards, and this event greatly strengthened the position of Odovacar, with whose career the ancient order of things came to an end, and that of the Middle Ages finally opened. The Empire of the West had fallen, the history of Italy had begun.

<sup>1</sup> There was a common but mistaken belief that Lucullus's villa was situated in the small Castello dell' Uovo.

## BOOK II

### *GOTHS AND BYZANTINES*

#### CHAPTER I

##### ODOVACAR

ODOVACAR was born in 433, and now, at the age of forty-six, was the leader of an army composed of various races, every one of which claimed him as their own. Most authorities declare him to have been of the Scyrian tribe, but some declare that he was the son of the same Edecon whom Attila had sent with Orestes on the famous embassy to Theodosius II. There is no doubt that he was one of the barbarians who joined the Huns in Attila's day, but separated from them after that king's death. He was still a youth when he set out with a band of followers to seek his fortune in Italy. His route lay through Noricum, a province that for thirty years (453-82) had been continually devastated, pillaged, and plunged in anarchy. No form of government had survived there, and the only authority that helped to keep life in the social body, was that of St. Severinus. This holy man, dwelling in a lonely hermitage, exercised a prodigious moral influence over the inhabitants who gave prompt obedience to his voice. Legend relates that one day Odovacar—then an unknown youth—came to the

door of the hermit's cell. Being of lofty stature, he had to cross the threshold with bended head, and he asked the saint to grant him his blessing. Severinus blessed him, and then added: "*Vade ad Italiam*, for although thou art clad in coarsest skins, a great fortune awaits thee in that land. In fact Odovacar was already in Italy between 460 and 470, and in 472 he was fighting in Ricimer's army before the walls of Rome. In 476, as we have seen, the soldiers proclaimed him raised on their shields, and he filled the place both of Augustulus and Orestes. The office of Emperor of the West, already reduced to a shadow by the overwhelming strength of the generals who did all its work, now vanishes altogether before the barbarian usurper. So, for the first time in the world's history, Italy appears as a new and independent political entity. But that a barbarian should rule over the land at the head of a barbarian army, was a state of things so entirely unprecedented that none could perceive on what legal basis his authority could stand. Hence Odovacar neither dared to take the title of Emperor nor that of King of Italy; he was only a barbarian king. What right had he therefore to supreme command in the Peninsula, the ancient seat of Empire?

The only true and legitimate sovereign was now enthroned at Constantinople, and therefore two State embassies waited upon him between 477 and 478. One was sent from Salona in the name of Julius Nepos, who asked to be reinstated in his rightful position at Ravenna, whence he had been driven by force. The second came in the name of the Roman Senate and of Augustulus, who very probably, in accordance with previous stipulations arranged with Odovacar, now sought to reward that chief for having spared his life while depriving him of his throne. In fact, the orators constituting this second embassy came to explain that the Romans felt no need

of an Emperor of their own, since one sufficed for both the East and the West.<sup>1</sup> Odovacar could govern Italy with the title of Patrician, in the name of the Emperor, to whom he therefore sent back the Imperial insignia (*ornamenta Palatii*).

In 474 Leo I. had been succeeded at Constantinople by his nephew, Leo II. The latter being still a minor, was under the regency of his father, Tarasicodissus, or Zeno, as he was named by the Greeks, who, on his son's early decease, became the veritable Emperor. Soon afterwards, Basiliscus the Monophysite, aided by his intriguing sister, the Empress Verina, widow of Leo I., rose in revolt against Zeno, and drove him from the throne, on which, however, he was replaced in 477 by a counter-revolution of the Orthodox party. Accordingly, when, between 477 and 478, the ambassadors sent by Augustulus and the Senate appeared before him, he was in a difficult position, for he had no wish to recognise the illegally elected Odovacar, but felt powerless at that moment to depose the man who had forcibly usurped the Imperial authority in Italy. Therefore he had recourse to one of the diplomatic quibbles so often employed by the Byzantines. His official reply to the Romans was conceived as follows: "Two Emperors were sent to you from Constantinople, Anthemius and Nepos; you slew the first and deposed the second. Now you must make appeal to Nepos, who still remains the sole legitimate and acknowledged Emperor of the West." But, together with this official reply, he addressed Odovacar in a private letter with the title of Patrician. Thus, although practically accepting the accomplished fact, he reserved his opinion as to its legality, and kept his own authority intact. Meanwhile Odovacar assumed the government of Italy as the nominal

<sup>1</sup> "Proprio Imperatore se non indigere; unum Imperatorem sufficere qui utriusque Imperii fines tueretur" (Malchus, "Fragm.," 10).

subordinate of Constantinople, but in reality with all the freedom of action of an independent prince.

The first and principal question that Odovacar had to decide was that promised division of the land which had been the origin of his power. As to the precise manner in which this division was effected no information has come down to us. We can only form hypothetical suppositions. But we know for certain that such division was not made, as was credited by many, on any newly invented system resulting from the barbarian conquest. On the contrary, in Italy as elsewhere, it was merely the modification of a system already existing in the Empire. The added burdens it imposed on the inhabitants were really much lighter than they seemed. In one way or another the army had been always a charge on the people even as the numerous subsidies given to keep the barbarians quiet and the enormous expenses of the Imperial wars had been invariably paid from the people's purse. Soldiers, wherever they were billeted, were entitled to occupy one-third of their host's dwelling, of which they too were styled the "hosts," and naturally they received full pay as well as free quarters. Then the troops permanently detached for the defence of the frontier lines (*limitanei*) had not only free quarters but a certain proportion of land to cultivate for their own benefit. Therefore, if Odovacar's soldiers, who formed the army destined to defend Italy, were now assigned one-third of the soil, and were to till it and live on its produce, this arrangement was no innovation after all. There was one novelty, however, in that the barbarians had now to be provided for, even when their military service was over, and not the able-bodied alone, but also the old folk, women, and children. This measure had been imposed to satisfy the forcibly asserted claims of mutinous legionaries.



But there is no reason to believe that this system of allotment was enforced everywhere at once, nor that where it prevailed every part of the soil was divided. Odovacar's army was by no means large enough to occupy the whole of Italy. His barbarians were only quartered in certain provinces, and only in these was there any division of the land. Small proprietors, where any yet remained, were left in peace, since it was useless to split up holdings which barely provided for their owners' needs. This class, therefore, was left *in statu quo*, and was even less heavily taxed than before, inasmuch as the barbarians were too ignorant to know how to collect money with the oppressive regularity of the Imperial revenue office. Nor was there any striking change in the condition of the working classes in the towns. Thus the small farmers, peasants, and slaves who cultivated the soil and were transferred together with it to barbarian owners, remained more or less as they were before, and often, indeed, in a better condition. The real sufferers were the proprietors of large estates, but even these are believed to have paid lighter taxes than before on such share of their land as they were allowed to retain. In any case landed property was far more split up than before. Then, as the barbarians—following their old native customs—preferred country to town life, all arable land, which had long lacked the labour required to make it productive, was now cultivated on a larger and improved scale. The old Roman administration was left intact throughout the country, so too the Roman method of levying the taxes; but these were not increased; on the contrary, as far as we can discover, they must have been lowered. Bishop Epiphanius obtained considerable exemptions for his flock at Pavia, and also throughout Liguria, where all taxes had been recently raised to a preposterous amount.

Odovacar's rule, lasting about thirteen years, was con-

fined almost exclusively to Italy, the subject provinces being now altogether detached from that country. Even Provence, the most Romanised portion of Gaul, was abandoned to the Visigoths. Rhoetia, which had been always considered as an integral appendage to Italy, still belonged to it in the same fashion as Sicily, although the Vandals occupied various parts of that island in accordance with the treaty concluded in 442. They likewise held Corsica, Sardinia, and the Balearic Isles. For the moment, at least, this new state of things saved the country from being exhausted by other great wars, and therefore the reign of Odovacar was for some time a period of rest and relief from public calamities, although we learn that deeds of violence and spoliation occasionally occurred, and became more frequent towards the end of his rule. As time went on Odovacar's position became greatly improved in some respects. At first, in fact, and as long as the deposed Emperor Nepos lived, it was a decidedly illegal position, but at the latter's death in 480 everything was changed. It is true that Odovacar continued to bear the sole title of "Patrician"; could neither assume the title of Emperor nor even that of King of Italy; but he had increased power to act as an independent sovereign. He now began to nominate the Consuls of the West, and these were recognised in the East. The general unity of the Empire, of which Zeno was the head, was, theoretically, left uncontested; practically, however, Odovacar's authority was far greater, and was implicitly acknowledged to be so. At Ravenna he was enabled to collect a fleet that served to protect him from Vandal incursions, and between 481 and 482 he made an expedition to Dalmatia and annexed that region to his own State. Although this measure highly displeased the Emperor, and afterwards led to very harmful results for himself, he had augmented his territories, and no evil came of it for the moment.

While affairs were in this state the political life of the Italian people remained practically extinct. Hence all the more energy was manifested in the development of their spiritual life under the supremacy of the Pope.

But to a considerable extent the tendency of religious activity was determined by the relation, or, more strictly speaking, the opposition, still existing between the Roman Church and the Church of Constantinople, where there was never any truce to the doctrinal disputes which were so repugnant to the Roman Catholic spirit. Fierce conflicts were now being waged in the East between the Nestorians, who declared that the Virgin was only the Mother of Christ in so far as He was man, and the Arians and the Monophysites, for it was maintained by the latter that the humanity and divinity of Jesus were one and the same thing. But as it was exactly in the name of this doctrine that Basiliscus had driven Zeno from the throne, the latter, who owed his restoration to the Orthodox Catholics, was willing to do anything to prevent the dispute from bursting out again. Accordingly, between 482 and 483 he published an epistle known as the "Henoticon," which was believed to have been inspired, if not written, by the Patriarch Acacius. In this letter he tried to conciliate both the Orthodox and the Monophysites, by taking a middle course. But Rome never approved of similar half-measures, never admitted the idea of the Emperor pronouncing judgment in religious disputes. Hence Pope Simplicius (468-483) unhesitatingly condemned both the "Henoticon" and its prompter Acacius.

This struggle, in which, seconded by the Italians, Simplicius showed, as usual, a truly Roman tenacity, fomented the existing antagonism between the East and the West, and was therefore advantageous to Odovacar. At that time the Pope was morally, and even more than morally speaking, the most powerful personage in Italy. If

Odovacar, as an Arian, had openly opposed him, Simplicius could have easily roused the whole country against him, and made it impossible for him to maintain his position in Italy. But while the religious dispute continued to rage between Rome and Constantinople the Pope and Odovacar were bound by common interests to reciprocal support.

Pope Simplicius died on the 2nd of March, 483, whereupon Odovacar made a false move, of which he felt the consequences before long. Undoubtedly it was very important for him to control the choice of a new Pontiff. He sought not only to prevent the riots which had often caused bloodshed in the streets of Rome on similar occasions, but also desired a Pope well disposed to himself. Thus when the preliminary assembly failed to agree in the choice of a candidate, the Pretorian Prefect, Cecina Basilius, suddenly intervened in Odovacar's name, and declared that no election would be valid without the King's voice. On this point, he said, the King was obeying the wish of the deceased Pope, who, before expiring, had given him directions with regard to the election. A decree was likewise issued prohibiting the alienation of Church property and threatening anathema on all who failed to respect it. After this the Assembly was summoned to sanction the decree and decide the election, which resulted in favour of Felix II. (483-492),<sup>1</sup> the candidate recommended by Odovacar. The King's action in the matter does not seem to have excited any serious complaint at the time; for it was a known fact that not only had the Emperor of the East invariably exercised great influence in the Conclaves, Synods, Councils, and all other affairs of the Church, but that even in Italy the

<sup>1</sup> Others designated him as Felix III., it being disputed whether Felix II. (355-365), the rival of Pope Liberius, had been regularly elected or no.

Emperor Honorius had decided the contest between Eulalius and Bonifacius when both were elected to the Papal throne. It has also been proved that the Emperor of the West had the right of intervention and decision in questions of this kind; indeed the clergy themselves frequently appealed to his verdict. Hence it may be supposed that Odovacar had no idea that he was acting illegally, much less forcing the election of a Pope to his own taste, but that the choice of Felix II. was veritably suggested to him by the dying Simplicius. On the other hand, he was not an emperor, but a barbarian king of the Arian faith. Accordingly he had no reason to think that the Roman Church, always so jealous of its prerogative, could by any possibility approve of his conduct. However this may be, even Felix II. hotly continued the attack against the "Henoticon" and Acacius, and excommunicating the latter, forwarded to Constantinople his decree to that effect. This affair caused a schism that lasted for thirty-five years (484-519), during which period Rome never yielded a jot, and finally secured the triumph of the Orthodox doctrines. But although this strife proved entirely advantageous to Odovacar, his interference in the Papal election had cast into the Roman Church the seed of a deep and threatening distrust towards him.

Meanwhile another and graver complication of a political kind was coming to the surface. Beyond Rhoetia lay Noricum, the province in which Salzburg now stands, and that extended to the Danube beyond which dwelt the tribe of the Rugi. As we have previously noted, the whole of this Noric region had been wasted and reduced to the last extremity of wretchedness by continual barbarian raids; and the only power preserving some sort of social life was that wielded by St. Severinus, described, in the words of his biographer Eugippus, as a thoroughly Latin man : *loquela*



*tamen ipsius manifestabat hominem omnino latinum.* In his hermit's cell he collected raiment and food for the needy, and gave counsels and commands which were willingly obeyed even by the barbarians themselves. This furnished another visible proof of the almost omnipotent power that religion then exercised over the minds of men. It was solely through the efforts of St. Severinus that the Roman inhabitants of the region escaped total destruction. But he died about the year 482, and his death was most disastrous for Noricum. The Rugi immediately poured in, ravaging and sacking everything, even the saint's cloister and cell. Had it been possible, says Eugippus, they would have carried off the very walls. Indeed, had the Rugi taken permanent possession of this region, they would have constituted a serious danger for Odovacar, since he would have had them close to the borders of his kingdom, and always ready to push across them, on account of the wasted state of the land. Now Zeno, in fact, was urging them to invasion, from the usual Oriental policy of neutralising the barbarians by fomenting hostility between different tribes, and likewise because he was very suspicious of Odovacar, since the latter not only acted more and more in the style of an independent sovereign, but had recently annexed Dalmatia. Also, shortly before, certain persons who were hatching a plot against Zeno had made appeal to Odovacar; and although the King had refused them his aid, that did not prevent the affair from greatly augmenting the Emperor's ill-feeling and suspicion. Consequently the Rugi were incited to advance against him, and Odovacar was forced into war with them.

In 487 he began the campaign with his barbarian army, which, according to Paulus Diaconus, also included many Italians—*nec non Italiæ populi*. With these forces he vanquished the Rugi, capturing their king and putting

to flight the King's son. Nevertheless, this war had many and serious results. A great number of the less impoverished inhabitants of Noricum emigrated to Italy and brought with them the body of St. Severinus. After being taken to various places, this relic was afterwards, at a widow woman's prayer, transferred to the vicinity of Naples and deposited on the site now known as that of Castello dell' Uovo. The son of the Rugian King sought refuge with the Ostrogoths, who were then ruled by the valiant Theodoric, of the princely Amal line, and tried to induce him to make war upon Odovacar. As the Emperor, as we shall presently see, likewise encouraged him to the same effect, events of startling importance soon occurred in Italian history.

## CHAPTER II

### THEODORIC AND THE OSTROGOTHS IN ITALY

THE majority of the Ostrogoths had remained united with the Huns in ancient Dacia, and, like other Teutonic tribes, only separated from them when Attila's death caused the Hun empire to split up and melt away like a dream. Then the Ostrogoths occupied Pannonia, under the rule of three brothers of the noble Amal line. They seem to have dwelt in that country more or less in the position of *fœderati*; and they kept up the accustomed persistent disputes with the Empire, regarding the lands they demanded and the stipend or tribute they claimed. All this led to a conflict, at the close of which an annual tribute was fixed, and, to guarantee the continuance of peace, Theodoric, a boy of eight years and son of Theodimir, one of the three Amal brothers, was sent as a hostage to Constantinople. This event proved to be of great importance, since in this way a gifted lad, full of courage and ambition, and with a great future before him, had the advantage of being trained to arms on the Roman system. Meanwhile one of the Amal brethren died; another, on being driven by famine to seek his fortune in Italy with some of his people, was encouraged, as we have mentioned, by Imperial subsidies to settle in Gaul. Thus Theodimir alone remained in Pannonia, and his son Theodoric, who returned from Constantinople

at the age of eighteen, immediately undertook, on his own account, a campaign against the Sarmatians, and proved his great valour in the field. In 474 his father died, and although his mother was only a concubine, nevertheless the people willingly elected him as their chief in virtue of his illustrious Amal blood and his soldierly prowess. But he then had to solve the problem of feeding his tribe, for the resources of Pannonia were exhausted, and the Emperor supplied little money.

At this time there was another Gothic tribe in the Eastern Empire, led by another Theodoric, son of Triarius, and surnamed Strabo, because of his squinting eyes. This Eastern Goth had been moved to deep resentment by Aspar's miserable end, and aspired to obtain the post that general had filled in Constantinople. Accordingly he joined Basiliscus when the latter revolted and drove Zeno from the throne. Theodoric the Amal, on the contrary, sided with Zeno, and helped him to gain the victory, whereupon the Emperor naturally overwhelmed him with honours, giving him the titles of Patrician and *Magister Militum*, and likewise adopting him as a son. Afterwards, however, Zeno was involved in difficulties by the ever-increasing pretensions of the rival Gothic chiefs, who were both in arms and both claiming to be appointed stipendiary captains of the Empire. Zeno, on the contrary, would have preferred to be rid of them both; but this was impossible. Accordingly he asked the advice of the Senate, and was told that, as the exchequer could not be burdened with the expense of maintaining two captains with their respective armies, he must decide to retain only one. He naturally chose Theodoric the Amal, who had come to his aid in the moment of danger, and assigned him the task of keeping the other in check. But when the two barbarians met, they ended by combining against Zeno, whose only hope now lay in their mutual jealousy,

which he did his best to foment. Thus he was compelled to oscillate continually between the two, until, by Strabo's death in 481, Theodoric the Amal remained alone and more powerful than ever at the head of the united Gothic tribes. For the following six years, sometimes in harmony with the Emperor, rendering him important services and rewarded with honours and gold, at others, detached from the Court and making raids on his own account for the purpose of exacting fresh favours. In 483 he was promoted to be *Magister militiæ præsentis*; in 484 he was appointed Consul. At that time he again did good service to Zeno by defeating his enemies; then once more assumed a threatening attitude by advancing to the very gates of Constantinople, ravaging the country and burning towns.

It is easy to see why Zeno should have longed to rid himself by some means of so uncomfortable a neighbour, and sought to liberate the Empire from a barbarian tyranny that threatened a revival not only of Aspar's times but even the positive rise of a second Ricimer in the East. What, however, was to be done? The old system of pitting one barbarian against another seemed to be no longer feasible now that one of the two rival Goths was dead. Odovacar, however, was still ruling in Italy, and, for reasons we have already explained, Zeno had cause to be highly displeased with him, especially since rumours had spread that he was in secret agreement with the rebel conspirators. As we have seen, it was this suspicion that moved Zeno to stir the Rugi against Odovacar. But the latter defeated his assailants, occupied Noricum, invaded the land of the Rugi, captured their king and queen, and drove the king's son to seek refuge with Theodoric and implore him to avenge his wrongs. Theodoric seemed very willing to undertake that risky task, perhaps because the land of the Rugi marched with



the Pannonian border, so that their defeat was a peril to his country, or because he hoped that victory would make him master of the fertile plains of Italy, where his people could find a safe and settled abode. In addition to all this, the discord that had now broken out between Odovacar and the Pope had weakened the former and consequently made him less formidable. Odovacar's annexation of Dalmatia, his entry into the Rugian land, his increasingly independent rule, and the manner in which he had long supported the Bishop of Rome against the Emperor made the latter welcome the idea of a radical change in Italian affairs; for if Theodoric left Constantinople and settled in Italy he could not only inflict punishment on Odovacar, but could also adopt a more resolute attitude towards the Pope. Moved by these considerations, Theodoric was willing to undertake the expedition and Zeno to encourage the attempt. It has been much disputed by historians which of the two first started the idea. According to Jordanes, Theodoric proposed it to Zeno, saying, "If I am defeated, I shall be no longer a burden to thee; but should I conquer the *tyrant*" (not being a legitimate sovereign, they designated Odovacar by that term), "I will govern the country in thy name, *vestro dono, vestroque munere possidebo*." But Procopius declares that Zeno persuaded Theodoric to invade Italy, and Anonymus Valesii states that Zeno sent the Goth *ad defendendam sibi Italiam*. The real fact is that the one wished to go and the other to make him go, their common interests urging both towards the same goal. Accordingly, Theodoric finally started for Italy in the autumn of 488.

The enterprise was not exclusively military, but rather an invasion, or "trek," of an armed people, since Theodoric now advanced in the name of the Empire, followed by all the old folk, women, and children, of the

tribe, by a train of waggons loaded with household goods which served as habitations during the journey, and also carried hand-mills for the grinding of corn. The nomad multitude were known as Ostrogoths ; but, as usual, comprised a mixture of different races, although all bore the name of the Ostrogoth majority. The various tribes had been drawn together by the valour and reputation of their joint chief, by the forays and campaigns undertaken at his order, and by the general and pressing need of seeking a land where they could find a permanent home affording means of subsistence. There is no possibility of discovering their exact numbers. Some authorities put the armed men at 40,000, others at a still higher figure. Writers variously calculate the total number of men, women, aged persons, and children at from 200,000 to 300,000 souls. Their route led over the Julian Alps, and was a fatiguing, and sometimes disastrous, journey. The cold was severe ; their hair, beard, and clothes froze on them. They had to live on the country, either by the fruits of the chase or by plundering all the places they attacked on the way. Their first sanguinary encounter was with the Gepidæ, but other combats followed, and finally, after eight months of peril and hardship on the same road previously trodden by Theodosius, Alaric, and Attila, their descent into Italy was accomplished in July, 489. On the 28th of August, by the river Isonzo, and not far from Aquileia, they first met Odovacar in battle.

The latter was a valiant leader, commanded a better and larger army, and had also taken up a strong position. But he could neither withstand the first furious charge of the Goths, nor the superior strategy of their chief. Another battle was fought on the banks of the Adige, near Verona (September 30, 489), and in this, although Odovacar was again defeated, Theodoric must have suffered heavy loss, seeing that, instead of continuing his

advance, he retired on Milan, and later behind the walls of Pavia. Odovacar then directed his march towards Rome, hoping that the Eternal City might be easily entered and permanently occupied. The possession of Rome would have been an important assistance, not only morally but materially, inasmuch as for the rest of the war all South Italy in his rear would have been safe. But, on the contrary, the difficulty of his position was now clearly shown. The gates of Rome were shut in his face, and the inhabitants of Italy began to show him marked hostility; partly on account of his recent conflict with the Church, partly for the increased deeds of spoliation recently committed by him, either from irregularity of administration or the growing necessities of war. The Church had taken advantage of all these causes of discontent in order to excite the populace against him; and before long it was openly said that the clergy had organised a general conspiracy against him somewhat, it would seem, in the style of the Sicilian Vespers.<sup>1</sup> Worse still, there were many desertions from his ranks, and when Tufa, his own *Magister Militum*, passed over to the enemy with other captains, his army began to dwindle at an alarming rate. But presently Tufa, after obtaining from Theodoric the command of a small body of Goths, deserted his new chief and returned to Odovacar, who had the men he brought with him promptly put to death. Hence, it may be supposed that Tufa's first flight was only a stratagem. Nevertheless, many real cases of desertion occurred in Theodoric's army as well as Odovacar's. For, in fact, these great hordes of mixed barbarian tribes, as we have noted more than once, were little more than bands of adventurers in the service of the Empire, men of no country and no faith, solely guided by the personal

<sup>1</sup> Dahn, ii. 80; also Hodgkin iii. 225-6; both based on the authority of Ennodius's Panegyric on Theodoric.

interest of their chiefs, and often of their sub-chiefs, who all acted on their own account.

Thus both sides were hampered by great and increasing difficulties ; but both made tremendous efforts to overcome them ; hence the war dragged on for a very long time. Odovacar made a worthy resistance to the foe, for Theodoric had been forced to shut himself up in Pavia, where the throng had been so great on his first entry that his men suffered enormously. The clergy came to their succour under the orders of Bishop Epiphanius, who laboured heroically to relieve the general misery, regardless of party or race, and ransomed from slavery many prisoners on either side at his own expense. Meanwhile Odovacar had reorganised his force and entered Milan, ready once more to measure swords with his rival. But now other barbarian tribes poured in to have a share in the war, thereby altering and greatly confusing its course. The Burgundians crossed the Alps, ostensibly to help Odovacar, though their principal object was to plunder the land for their own benefit. The Visigoths instead were moved by community of race to join with Theodoric, and fought in his ranks at the battle of the Adda on the 11th of August, 490. Here Odovacar was foredoomed to defeat. He had been able to make a vigorous stand against Theodoric, although the latter was backed by the authority of the Emperor and the Church, and actively assisted by rebels in arms ; but, faced by the combined forces of the Visigoths and Ostrogoths, he was obliged to retreat upon Ravenna. There he bravely withstood a siege that lasted three years, inasmuch as Theodoric was unable to maintain a vigorous blockade by sea, and had to meet determined sorties on the inland side of the city. Meanwhile, however, the Ostrogoth chief was practically master of all Italy, where he daily acquired increased favour and strength. In the greater part of the country

there seemed to be a truce to bloodshed and the clash of war: *ubi primum respirare fas est a continuorum tempestate bellorum*.<sup>1</sup>

But the struggle went on very vigorously at Ravenna, and Theodoric was finally enabled to blockade the port, when the capture of Rimini enabled him to collect a sufficient number of ships. Thereupon the besieged city began to suffer cruelly from famine, and, according to the Ravennese chronicler Agnello, many spared by the sword perished by starvation. At last, in February, 493, the fifth year of the war and the third of the siege, Odovacar was forced to surrender. On the 25th of that month he gave his son as a hostage, and on the 27th the terms of capitulation were definitely settled with the aid of the Archbishop of Ravenna. This, too, was another proof of the lofty part then played by the clergy, and therefore by the Church, in all public affairs of the greatest moment.

The exact terms of the treaty are imperfectly known, and have accordingly formed the theme of numerous disputes. What is certain is that Odovacar surrendered on condition of his life being spared: *accepta fide, securus es esse de sanguine*, as Anonymus Valesii has recorded. But the Byzantine writers append a very singular clause to these conditions, by which the conquered chief was to be allowed a share in the conqueror's government and even retain the command of a portion of the army. It is very hard to understand how this could possibly be, especially since Theodoric had come at Zeno's command for the express purpose of vanquishing and expelling Odovacar. For even admitting the existence of so unlikely a pact, it is incredible that it should have been honestly concluded by either party, or that any one could

<sup>1</sup> These words are contained in a letter by Pope Gelasius, believed to have been written in 492.



have had faith in it. On the 5th of March, 493, Theodoric entered Ravenna in triumph, all the clergy coming forth to meet him, chanting Psalms, and with the Archbishop at the head of the procession. On the 15th of the same month he invited Odovacar to a grand banquet, but the moment the vanquished chief appeared, hidden soldiers rushed upon him, and Theodoric, drawing his sword, dealt him a mortal blow with his own hand. "Where is God?" cried the deposed prince. His assailant, noting that his keen sword-blade had pierced deep into his enemy's breast, with scarcely any resistance, remarked with a barbarously cynical smile, "One would think he had no bones!" All Odovacar's kinsmen and friends shared his fate, more or less. Some apologists of Theodoric declared that the killing of Odovacar was simply an act of revenge, on discovering that the latter was treacherously plotting against him; but this hypothesis is only another proof of the hatred and distrust felt on both sides, and of the consequent impossibility of any real peace between them.

## CHAPTER III

### THE REIGN OF THEODORIC

AFTER this truly barbaric deed, Theodoric could rightly consider himself the absolute master of Italy. His actual position, in fact, was little different from that held by Odovacar. The latter had commanded a confused multitude of separate tribes, Heruli, Turcilingi, and more particularly Scyri. Theodoric, too, was at the head of a medley of various races, of Gepidæ, Rugi, Breoni, Romans, or rather Romanised barbarians,<sup>1</sup> but, the greater number being Ostrogoths, all were given that name. Therefore even his followers formed no distinct people united by the bond of patriotism, but rather a horde of adventurers bound together by the general need of earning their daily bread by warfare and plunder, and—like Odovacar's men—organised on the military system of the Romans. As we have already seen, Theodoric did not invade Italy as the king of a Germanic people, but as a Patrician, as the representative and mandatary of the Emperor. The next in command was a *Magister militum*, while the *Comites* presiding over the different provinces of Italy had different divisions of the army under their orders. The chief diversity between Odovacar and the Ostrogoth lay in Theodoric's personal character

<sup>1</sup> Sybel, "Entstehung, des deutschen Königsthum; *vide* 2nd edition, p. 283—4

and superior talent in politics and war. His intellect and, in some degree, his temperament also had been moulded at Constantinople, for he there became an admirer of Roman civilisation, without ever ceasing entirely to be a barbarian. Although it is a certain fact that he had no literary culture, it is hard to believe that—as generally said—he was unable to write his own name. It is true that he was accustomed to make his signature with a gold stamp, engraved with the first four letters of his name, but this may have been to save time when he had to append his signature in diplomatic fashion to masses of official documents.

It is not to be imagined that Theodoric's Ostrogoths continued to retain all their primitive old Teuton institutions. Although he had brought a whole people—even the old folk, women, and children—that is, a huge multitude—in his train, he was more particularly the military chief and commander of a host of various tribes who had dwelt first in the land of the Huns and then within the Empire. Hence his followers no longer observed the method of holding property in common, as practised in the old Germanic village, nor that of having popular assemblies as checks on the royal power. Theodoric ruled with military absolutism, only consulting his army on exceptional occasions. In any case, his Goths could never have legislated for the Romans nor the Romans for the Goths. He came with the title of Patrician to reconquer Italy for the Empire, the unity of which, theoretically at all events, had never been entirely destroyed. For even while there were two Imperial thrones, whenever an Emperor of the West died, his power passed to the monarch of the East until his successor was chosen. There is no doubt that, like Ricimer, Orestes, and Odovacar, Theodoric also aspired to become the true and effective master of Italy, and, possibly,

a species of Emperor of the West. But the sway he desired, and partly achieved, was in open contradiction with the mission he had accepted and undertaken: hence this sway had to be legalised, and as no one but the Emperor could do it, he appealed to him without delay. In 490, immediately after the battle of the Adda, when he already knew himself to be lord of Italy, although his entry into Ravenna had not yet taken place, he despatched an embassy to the Emperor, asking permission to assume the regal dignity, *ab eodem operans se vestem induere regiam*.<sup>1</sup> This embassy, however, produced no result, for Zeno died in April, 491, and his successor, Anastasius, sent no reply. By that time, having already occupied Ravenna and killed Odovacar there, Theodoric was proclaimed King by his Goths without awaiting the new Emperor's decision. This election, however, failed to give him the legal authority over the Romans that could emanate from the Emperor alone. In actual fact, he was no king, but a tyrant like Odovacar, the man whom he had attacked, for that very reason, in the name of the Empire.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of his position was much lightened in 498, when, having gained a considerable increase of power, he finally succeeded, through another embassy, in obtaining from Anastasius the royal insignia (*omnia ornamenta Palatii*) which Odovacar had forwarded to Constantinople. But there is no reason to believe that the new authority was conferred upon him without its limits being accurately fixed and its attributes more or less defined. Both Cassiodorus and Procopius give hints regarding terms and conditions. The second writer relates, in fact, that the Goths, when overcome by Belisarius at a later date, stated to their conqueror that

<sup>1</sup> "Gothi sibi confirmaverunt Theodoricum regem, non expectantes jussionem novi Principis" (Anonymus Valesii, xii. 57). This proves that he had not been a real king of the Goths; but only perhaps a Germanic *Princeps*, or as Sybel expresses it, a *Gaukönig*.

they had faithfully observed all the terms and conditions imposed by the Empire. Theodoric undoubtedly was the commander of the army, was supreme judge, and empowered to appoint all State officials. But it were a mistake to imagine that he, therefore, became a species of Emperor of the West, or even a king of the Romans independent of the sovereign, at whose bidding he had come. Theodoric had no power of promulgating real laws, but only edicts for Italy, which were never to exceed the limits already prescribed by the laws issued at Constantinople, and applied throughout the Empire.

He continued to elect Consuls whose office was Imperial, and therefore exercised in all parts of the Empire. One Consul was chosen in the East ; the other in Italy by Theodoric ; but his choice had to be ratified at Constantinople. So too, the Emperor alone had the right to coin money stamped with his own image. All this serves to prove that the unity of the Empire was still preserved.

Theodoric's rule only extended over Italy, although he occasionally ventured to exercise it in the islands and in Africa. But no mention was made of an Empire of the West. Nor did the Emperor ever recognise the existence of an hereditary Gothic kingship, and therefore Theodoric's successors were always obliged to ask the sanction of Constantinople, without which they had merely the status of tyrants. Theodoric's government had another special characteristic. The whole civil administration remained in Roman hands ; military affairs in those of the Goths, of whom the army was composed. This caused many writers to declare that Romans were forbidden to carry arms at that period. But there is here a confusion with the severe prohibition to that effect, decreed by Theodoric at a much later time, when he began to fear a rebellion in Italy. Nor is it easy to believe that Romans could have been absolutely excluded from the



army, particularly when one recalls the very wide significance the term "Roman" then possessed, and the additional fact of the Goth army being composed of many races of diverse origin. It was indubitably a Goth army, therefore every member of it was known as a Goth. But Cassiodorus himself, while often repeating that the defence of the State was entrusted to the Goths, quotes in his letters (viii. 21 and 22) the instance of certain Roman nobles, under Theodoric's tutelage, who were taught the language of the Goths and shared in their military training. Certainly only a few Romans were admitted into the army, and even those grudgingly, but they were not wholly excluded. Another proof that they were not forbidden to bear arms, is furnished by the same writer, when he relates how he once had to desert his studies and hastily arm his people for the defence of South Italy against the Byzantines' threatened attack. It was impossible to draw a hard-and-fast line between the two races. Hence, although the administrative branch was assuredly left to the Romans, one cannot suppose that all Goths were excluded from it. Certain Gothic chiefs were Theodoric's trusted advisers, and in the conduct of his general policy, both abroad and at home, played an important part, none the less real for being unobtrusive.

The Goths retained their native laws, and the *Comites Gothorum* acted as their judges; they allowed the Romans to keep their own laws and institutions, while the rulers of the different provinces, in which the *Comites* exercised only military authority, acted as judges. In mixed cases the Gothic magistrate had to take a Roman colleague, and give sentence according to equity, so that finally the Roman law prevailed in such cases. Then, as the Goths were soldiers, it was natural that their legislation should be chiefly of a military nature. In civil and more especially in criminal law—which is necessarily territorial

—the Roman legal system prevailed. This explains why the *Edictum Theodorici*—thus designated as being the most important of all that ruler's decrees—was compiled from Roman laws, and obligatory even on the Goths, although it showed no trace of conformity with the Germanic customs, which cannot have been quite extinct among them.

Although the two legislations, Gothic and Roman, still remained in force, and although we may even believe that one of the conditions imposed by the Empire on Theodoric was precisely that of allowing Italians to retain their own laws, yet it is said that he refused at first to confer this privilege on any one who had fought for Odovacar. A new prince—so he was supposed to have said—is often compelled by necessity to inflict chastisement without being able to indulge in mercy. But Epiphanius, the Bishop of Pavia, persuaded him to adopt a milder course. Thereupon Theodoric not only renounced his first intention, but gave large sums of money to his adviser to relieve the people's sufferings. The fundamental idea of the new government certainly aimed at uniting and fusing Goths and Romans together. The former were to bear arms, while the latter were to furnish them with the means of subsistence. The administrative department was to be left to the Romans, with the obligation of yielding up a share of the land, of levying taxes and collecting the funds needed by the State. Accordingly the two nations lived long side by side without any fusion being effected between them. On the contrary, they remained in perpetual antagonism. It was impossible to fight against the laws of Nature.

Odovacar's faithful servant, Liberius, was entrusted with the administration of finance, and likewise with the task of arranging the new partition of the land—a most difficult operation, which he managed so skilfully that no

discontent was aroused by it. This was far from an easy feat, seeing that the lands once bestowed on Odovacar's soldiers had now to be apportioned to Goths alone, and the Goths were in the majority. But, as we have seen before, this mode of division had already become almost an established and normal usage in the Empire. Many of Odovacar's followers had perished or fled, others joined the Goths, and even the Goths were few in number contrasted with the population and extent of the country. For although the Italian population had been much reduced by war and massacre, the size of the estates now to be divided had thereby increased, somewhat to the benefit of the great landowners, who in other respects were the worst sufferers by the partition. But the burden of taxation was lighter under Theodoric's rule than under that of the Empire. More than once the Goth is said to have declared that it pained him to be forced to levy taxes from exhausted countries and impoverished contributors (Cassiodorus, iii. 40). Agricultural conditions steadily improved. Then, too, there were no wars for a long time, and the barbarian government, being less luxurious than the Roman, required less money. Hence, although subject to barbarians, Italy now enjoyed a period of tranquillity and peace.

The Cassiodori in the southern provinces were among the richest and most celebrated of the great landowners. Cassiodorus, the third of his name, likewise possessed numerous herds of horses, and made a gift of many animals to Theodoric, whom he served no less faithfully than he had formerly served Odovacar. He was the father of that Senator Cassiodorus, who became celebrated as the chief minister of the Ostrogoths. This Cassiodorus IV. was born at Squillace, in Calabria, about the year 480. He was a Patrician, a Consul, in virtue of

his rank as Quæstor, played the part of a prime minister, and was also *Magister officiorum* and Prætorian Prefect. The official letters he wrote while occupying these various posts form the most valuable record of the history of his times. Full of the old Roman spirit, he strove to keep it alive under the Gothic domination; he even inspired Theodoric's daughter Amalasuntha with the same ideas, for he was apparently charged with her education, and undoubtedly served her with his usual zeal when she succeeded to her father. Even after her decease he continued to work for the Gothic Government to the year 539, when he finally retired to his native place, and founding two monasteries, as we shall presently see, spent the rest of his life in religious and literary pursuits. He had always been devoted to study, even in the midst of his political labours, dedicating every leisure moment to literary toil. So after his final withdrawal from public life he worked harder than ever. Among other things, he wrote a history of the Goths, in which he sought to glorify their origin and destiny. All that remains to us is the abstract made of it by Jordanes, who tells that he wrote it from memory after a single reading of the work. Cassiodorus was certainly a man of very benevolent disposition. He aimed at Romanising the Goths, whom he sincerely loved and admired. He was a faithful and excellent official, and fluent and voluminous writer, but had no originality, no energy of character. He began his public career by penning a Panegyric on Theodoric, and invariably bowed to the will of his various masters. As a writer, he was always high-flown and rhetorical, drowning his ideas in a flood of conventional phrases and verbiage, and branching off into endless digressions, which often enough were totally irrelevant to the subject in hand. He might well be named a forerunner of the *litterati* of the seventeenth century (*trecentisti*). Never-

theless he was a clever man, an untiring worker, and even the commonplace loquacity with which he reproduced and retailed the current ideas and feelings of his times enables us to see them as in a mirror. In fact the very impersonality and objectivity of his work enables him to give a more faithful picture of events than an original writer of higher talent and stronger individuality.

Since Theodoric in effect was only a high military and political officer sent by the Emperor to preside over the government of Italy, he left the old administration and magistrature intact both in Rome and in the provinces, and entrusted them exclusively to Romans. As before, the provinces were governed by *Judices* who administered justice, only now these were nominated by Theodoric. There was a Prætorian Prefect at Ravenna, a *Vicarius Urbis* in Rome. The Senate retained its old official splendour, but without its old authority. It no longer legislated either for the Goths or the Romans, and all real laws touching the latter emanated from Constantinople. But an hereditary senatorial nobility still existed, with certain fixed offices, to which special duties and rights appertained. Also, by the natural force of circumstances, another aristocracy was arising at Theodoric's Court, composed of the leading Gothic nobles in his train, who were in attendance on his person and advised him on important State affairs. Every city retained a municipal body, headed by the *Duumviri*, while in collaboration with them and almost with the status of royal officials were the *Defensor*, who presided over the administration, and the *Curator*, who watched over the finances. The chief duties of the Curia consisted in collecting the taxes.

Accordingly, Theodoric's monarchy was at the same time a continuation of the Imperial rule and a Germanic institution, formed, that is to say, of two different social bodies, which, although remaining separate, were recipro-



cally modified by neighbourhood and intercourse. But the scheme of fusing them together was a vain dream : one of the two was necessarily doomed to yield and succumb to the other. Theodoric founded no new institutions nor did he make any real innovation either in the legislation or administration. He considered that all could be arranged by the carefully regulated management of justice and finance. Meanwhile Goths remained excluded from the administrative department ; they were not Roman citizens, nor could Theodoric himself endue them with that rank. They were foreigners constituting the army into which no Romans *qua* Romans were admitted ; the latter, however, were entitled to an active share in ordinary political matters. Hence the nature of the monarchy remained essentially military and alien, in spite of Theodoric having been named Patrician and Consul and adopted as a son by the Emperor, who had sent him to Italy. It was altogether a dangerous state of affairs, replete with fictions, double meanings, and forms which, instead of corresponding with the genuine substance of things, were in direct contradiction with it. Hence it could not last for long. Nevertheless, the first period of the Goth's reign secured to the Italian people a few years of prosperity as well as peace.

According to Procopius, Theodoric "defended Italy, loved justice, was nominally a tyrant, but in real fact a king." Many instances are adduced of his justice and of his tolerance in religious matters—a tolerance that seems occasionally worthy of a true philosopher and almost of a modern mind. In certain letters, dictated by him to Cassiodorus, he says "that religious faith should be imposed upon none, since no one can be forced to believe against his will" (ii. 27). He not only treated Catholics with respect, but solemnly paid worship to the relics of St. Peter in Rome. Numerous edifices and

public works were brought to completion by him, more particularly at Ravenna, where the mark of his hand is still visible. For there we find the very beautiful church of St. Apollinare, with its glorious mosaics, the remains of his own palace, and his Roman mausoleum, roofed by one huge block of stone. He erected public buildings at Verona and in many other North Italian cities. He restored the aqueducts and walls of Rome ; he drained a portion of the Pontine marshes ; he promoted industry, commerce, and agriculture to such excellent effect that the price of corn was much reduced, and Italy began to be able to supply her own food, which had long ceased to be the case. Besides the great development of the fine arts promoted under his rule in the wonderful Italian and Byzantine works which are still to be admired in Ravenna, equal encouragement was also afforded to letters. If the writings of Cassiodorus, with all their undeniable value, have the sad defect of high-flown rhetorical diction, the works of Boethius, which we shall have occasion to mention hereafter, display the remarkable literary gifts that won for their author his well-deserved fame. It were, however, a mistake to attribute all this to Theodoric's personal influence and initiative ; it was rather an indirect result of his rule. The peace he had ensured to Italy and the fact of his entrusting the internal administration to the practised hands of Roman officials greatly enhanced the prosperity of the country for a time. But it was not the birth of a new civilisation ; it was merely the revival of ancient social order and civilisation which sent up fresh shoots amid the tumbled ruins of barbarism.

All these changes occurred so rapidly and generally that Theodoric was finally stirred to alarm. This was natural, since there was plainly increasing evidence of the great and impassable barriers interposed by diversity of race, language, custom, tradition, and religion between

the Goths and the Romans. An Arian himself and the chief of Arian barbarians, Theodoric had to govern an essentially Roman country of the Catholic faith. Although the general of a theoretically undivided Empire and the subordinate of a sovereign whom he professed to obey, he was the independent king of the Goths, who had raised him on their shields, and meant to retain that position. Now, therefore, in his own case, as before in that of Odovacar, so long as the Emperor was at strife with the Pope it was advisable for the Pope and the King to remain good friends and oppose joint resistance to the pretensions of the Byzantine Court. But the moment Pope and Emperor should come to an understanding Theodoric might find himself in a most critical position.

Even apart from such complication the political outlook was dangerous enough in itself, inasmuch as the Empire was full of barbarians. By pursuing the old Byzantine method of exciting one tribe against another the Emperor might easily renew, to Theodoric's detriment, all that he had done against Odovacar with Theodoric's aid. Accordingly the latter soon formed plans for strengthening the defences of his own realm, since it was clear that he could not rely safely on Constantinople, where no disposition was shown to recognise his authority in a definite way. Being already in possession of Rhoetia, which was always regarded as an integral part of Italy, he marched into Illyricum in 504, in order to seize Sirmium, where he had formerly held the office of Prætorian Prefect, and which was the first halting-place for barbarians entering Italy from the Danube region. Therefore it was a suitable position for defending that frontier of Italy against new invaders. But the Emperor was extremely vexed by this measure, inasmuch as it gave Theodoric possession of the very portion of Illyricum that belonged to the East. Accordingly, in 508, he made this a pretext

for sending a Byzantine fleet to effect a sudden descent on the Southern Italian coast, where his ships—in the words of a contemporary writer—“won a shameful victory of Romans over Romans.” It was another instance of the same perpetually contradictory state of affairs. Theodoric’s letters formally recognise the authority of the Emperor of the whole world, *totius orbis præsidium*. He pleads for recognition from the sovereign from whom he has learnt how to rule the Romans. His government can only be, only seeks to be, “a copy of the one united Empire, *unici exemplar Imperii!*” How should one moulded by yourself desire to be separated from you? No division is possible between two Republics which have always been one body. The whole Roman kingdom must be animated by one will and one thought, *romani regni unum velle, una semper opinio sit*” (“Variæ,” i. 1).

Yet while Theodoric was dictating these epistles to his minister Cassiodorus he took a very different view of affairs in private converse with his Gothic counsellors and aimed at a very different, if not quite opposite policy. At that time he sought to rule over Italy as a thoroughly independent prince, and as this could not be approved by the Emperor the latter might at any moment decide to attack him or to hurl other barbarians against him. This fear inspired Theodoric with the idea of forming ties of kinship and alliance with the barbarians of Gaul, Spain, and Africa, thus constituting a species of confederation under his own protection—almost, in short, a barbarian Western Empire.

He married one of his sisters—Amalafrida—to Trasmund, the king of the Vandals; one of his daughters to Alaric II., the king of the Visigoths, related both to himself and his tribe, and who had helped him to vanquish Odovacar. They occupied Provence, a great part of Gaul and Spain, and Toulouse was their capital city. He

married another daughter to the heir of the Burgundian kingdom, King Gundobald's son. This was a vast realm, much harassed at that time by internal dissensions, by which the Franks were quick to profit. The latter, indeed, were rapidly beginning to build up a new barbarian state of greater power and extent than the others under the rule of Clovis, who, being a convert to Catholicism, enjoyed the powerful support of the Roman Church. Theodoric had been married to Clovis's sister Audeflada, and she had borne him a daughter, Amalasuntha, who was his sole heir. It was the fact of having no male offspring that made him increasingly anxious to ensure the succession and stability of his kingdom.

Clovis was the most successful and progressive of all the barbarian princes, for by war, violence, and crime of every kind he had contrived to sweep away his enemies, kinsmen, and rivals. He defeated the Burgundians and subjected them to his rule; he turned against the Visigoths, conquered them also, and murdered their king. Afterwards he not only gained, as we have noted, the favour of the Pope, but likewise that of the Emperor Anastasius, who named him honorary Consul for the evident purpose of pitting him against Theodoric. Therefore the latter, after having vainly exerted every effort to prevent the Franks from advancing against the Visigoths, decided to make war on them directly he heard that they were besieging Arles and on the point of capturing that city. Accordingly two Ostrogoth armies crossed the Alps between 508 and 509, and the first of the two arrived in time to relieve Arles, which was holding out stubbornly. The united Frank and Burgundian forces then suffered so signal a defeat that Jordanes, whose figures are always exaggerated, reckoned their losses at 30,000 slain. Thus Theodoric became master



not only of Provence, which, being a part of Italy, he kept for himself, but also of those parts of Spain and Gaul which had been held by the Visigoths, and of which he now assumed the government in the name of his youthful grandson Amalaric, the child of King Alaric II. After the decease of Clovis (511) the strong Frankish kingdom in Central and Northern Gaul began to be torn by internecine dissensions, and so for some time ceased to threaten Italy.

Thereupon, as though he were really an Emperor, Theodoric decreed that Provence should be governed in the Roman style ; and also despatched to Gaul a Prætorian Prefect and a *Vicarius Urbis*. In writing to the latter he urged him to prove himself a governor of the kind "that a *Romanus Princeps* could fittingly send to his provinces" ("Variæ," iii. 16). Next, in addressing the inhabitants of the provinces, he said : "Since, by Divine assistance, ye have recovered your ancient freedom, clothe yourselves in Roman customs, *vestimini moribus togatis*, forsaking barbarism and cruelty ; obey the ancient laws, and be thus worthy subjects of ours" (iii. 17). We have another striking illustration of the Romanism he affected, in the inscription dedicated to him at Terracina, to commemorate the draining of a marsh. In this Theodoric is addressed as *victor ac triumphator semper Augustus, bono Reipublicæ natus, castos libertatis et propagator romani nominis*.<sup>1</sup> It is another repetition of the same curious phenomenon, of the same contradiction. While being and desiring to be a barbarian king, he sought to legalise and legitimise that position by assuming the style of a Roman prince, and new Emperor of the West—a pretence that Anastasius could not have felt disposed to tolerate on the part of a barbarian. Consequently the Ostrogoth king vainly tried to propitiate him. His

<sup>1</sup> "Corpus Inscr. Lat.," vol. x. I, No. 6850.

failure in this was a greater source of anxiety than ever at this juncture, inasmuch as, having married his daughter Amalasantha to the barbarian prince Eutaric, it was a pressing necessity to win the Imperial approbation, for the purpose of assuring the legality of his son-in-law's succession to the throne. But, although Anastasius remained obdurate, Theodoric obtained all he wanted from the next Emperor, Justin, after successfully arranging a peace between the latter and Pope Hormisdas. Nevertheless, the final results of that treaty were very different, and far graver than might have been expected; for the religious question that was of such extraordinary importance in Italy, now assumed a totally different character, and became so much fiercer as to form, later on, one of the main causes of the overthrow of the Ostrogoth kingdom.

In spite of his Arian beliefs, Theodoric had been on good terms with the Pope for a considerable time, and sided with him in the religious conflict that had long raged between Rome and Constantinople. As we have already related, Pope Gelasius I. (492-496), a constant and resolute champion of the supremacy of the Roman Church, had condemned the "Henoticon," and denounced Acacius as a heretic, adding also, that if the Emperor had adopted those ideas, he too was a heretic. "As a Roman," the Pope said, "I should always be favourable to the Emperor; but tolerance towards heretics were more dangerous than the ravages of barbarians." Nor was there any reason why he should change his tone or attitude in favour of Theodoric, who, in fact, had no interest in opposing the Pontiff's views, since the dispute brought profit to himself. Nevertheless the Eastern Emperor who had despatched Theodoric to Italy, hoping—among other things—that he would prove better fitted than Odovacar to keep the Pope in check, was

entirely mistaken in him, and consequently increasingly resentful.

Gelasius was succeeded by Pope Anastasius II. (496-498), who was thus the Emperor's namesake, and a Roman of far gentler disposition than his predecessor. Theodoric profited by his mildness to send a friendly embassy to Constantinople, headed by Festus the Patrician, who did his best to arrange a politico-religious reconciliation, by giving the Emperor hopes of inducing the Pope to yield on the "Henoticon" question, and thus contrived to obtain for Theodoric the much-desired symbols of royalty. *Pace facta de presumptione regni*, as Anonymus Valesii said with regard to this affair. But Pope Anastasius died very soon, and a fiercely contested election ensued, during which Theodoric behaved most prudently. There were only two candidates. One was Laurentius, who being considered the more yielding and less opposed to the "Henoticon," was favoured by the Senators, and, naturally, still more by Festus, on account of the hopes the latter had inspired at Constantinople respecting the "Henoticon" question. The other candidate, Symmachus, on the contrary, was more decidedly Orthodox, and was therefore supported by the fervent Catholic party. The struggle between the two camps grew so furious that the public peace was endangered, and Theodoric was forced to act as arbiter. He proved his shrewdness by declaring that the choice must fall on the candidate having the majority of votes. Accordingly Symmachus was elected (498), and—as there seemed little fear of his being over-submissive to Constantinople—much to the Ostrogoth's satisfaction.

In the year 500 Theodoric made his State entry into Rome. The new Pope, with the Senate and the nobles, came to meet him outside the walls. He visited St. Peter's for the purpose of doing homage to the saint's

relics ; and announced that he would make every concession promised by the Emperors for the good of the Eternal City ; zealously promoted the restoration of ancient monuments ; caused public games to be given in the Circus ; and granted to the people an annual subsidy of 120,000 bushels of wheat. Meanwhile the adversaries of Symmachus had not calmed down, and now brought numerous accusations against him, including even a charge of adultery. Theodoric declared that he would take no part in the matter, and transferred the right of decision to a council that was called by the name of a Palmary Synod (*Synodus Palmaris*) (501), to which he sent the Bishop of Altinum as his representative, or Visitant. Opponents reminded him that the council should be convened by the Pope instead of the King, to which Theodoric replied that he had acted in full agreement with Symmachus. Next they protested against the intervention of the King's representative, or "Royal Visitant" as he was styled, inasmuch as no one could be authorised to judge the Head of the Church ; but to this Theodoric retorted that he merely asked the council to re-establish religious peace in the manner they deemed best. All, he added, would conform to the verdict they gave, while his own efforts would be limited to maintaining order and protecting the person of the Pontiff from every attack. The council concluded by recognising Symmachus without discussing his case, and Laurentius withdrew after various vain attempts at resistance. Thus the peace of the Church was finally re-established in the West ; but the strife with Constantinople was instantly renewed. Symmachus speedily assumed a very decided attitude ; and at a council that was convened in the year 502, he annulled two decrees of Odovacar (of 483) touching Papal elections, and prohibiting the alienation of Church property, declaring them illegal as emanating from a

layman, and unworthy of the sanction afterwards accorded them. Touching the "Henoticon," he wrote to the Emperor as follows : "In vain wouldst thou think to rebel against the power of St. Peter and escape judgment !" Nor could the Emperor make any effectual protest at the time, seeing that the people of Constantinople had now turned in favour of the Orthodox doctrine. Hence the Pope pursued his own course with unshaken perseverance. Among other projects, he was occupied in building new churches in Rome, gave the utmost care to the embellishment of St. Peter's, and began the construction of the Vatican. Thus, owing to his and Theodoric's efforts, the ancient capital of the Empire seemed to blossom into fresh life. At Constantinople, on the other hand, the great religious quarrel had produced riots and rebellions, which weakened the Emperor and afforded additional encouragement to the Pope. When Symmachus was succeeded by Hormisdas (514-523), this new Pontiff also struggled vigorously against the Emperor, who finally lost patience and dismissed the Papal ambassadors, saying that although he might tolerate pain and even injury, he could never stoop to take orders from Rome.

Matters being embittered to this extent, even Theodoric began to be oppressed with anxiety, for it would be certainly no benefit to him should the Emperor become too much incensed. It was precisely at this moment that the religious question underwent the radical change to which we have already alluded. Anastasius had been succeeded by Justin (518-527), an ignorant Dardanian peasant, but a valiant soldier, devoted to the Orthodox faith, and entirely under the influence of his nephew Justinian, who was a man of great talent, and no less strictly Orthodox than he was himself. Accordingly, the religious and political tendencies of the Empire now took so different a direction as to positively constitute the dawn of a new



era. The people of Constantinople became hotly zealous for the Catholic doctrine, heretics were persecuted, and, naturally, the Pope was moved to rejoicing. Theodoric therefore, alarmed by the new state of things in the East, and by the steady opposition to himself that he saw spreading in Italy, decided to assume the office of peacemaker between Pope and Emperor, hoping thus to win favour with both. His first efforts to this end succeeded easily enough ; but they subsequently produced unexpected results. In 519 the Pope sent ambassadors to Constantinople, who were received in state by the Emperor, Senate, and people. They were bearers of the *libellus*, that is, the previously arranged formula of the Empire's explicit submission to the Catholic doctrine, and this formula was immediately accepted. The "Henoticon"—that source of much strife—was solemnly condemned ; and anathema pronounced against Acacius. Thus at last Rome had triumphed, after fighting so long with unflinching vigour and without yielding a single point. It also appeared as though the Emperor were permanently reconciled not only with the Pope but with Theodoric as well. In fact, Prince Eutaric was named Consul, and adopted as a son, *per arma filius* ("Variæ," viii. 1), so the phrase ran. Nevertheless, all this soon turned to the hurt of Theodoric, who being an Arian, could not long remain on harmonious terms with a Pope and Emperor of the Orthodox creed, necessarily bound to combine against him sooner or later.

## CHAPTER IV

### END OF THEODORIC'S REIGN—THE REGENCY OF AMALASUNTHA

ABOUT the year 524 the Emperor Justin began to persecute the Arians, an event that involved Theodoric in serious difficulties, and especially because his son-in-law Eutarich was a fanatical and intolerant Arian. Accordingly he was forced to retaliate by persecuting the Catholics, and thus quickly at discord with the Pope and exposed to the public discontent. Just then, the people of Ravenna having burnt down the Synagogue, Theodoric forced them to rebuild it—a measure that increased the general ill-feeling against him. Also the Romans at large, and more particularly the Senators and great land-owners who had suffered most from the partition of the land, but now directed the administration and filled all the principal civil offices of the State, had begun, during the prosperous times of peace, to manifest a growing hatred of the Goths, together with a heightened confidence in their own powers. Naturally also this confidence was greatly augmented now that they could feel assured of the support of both Emperor and Pope. Thus Roman society and Roman culture gained ground very rapidly, and leaders of the cause were coming to a direct understanding with the Emperor. All this made Theodoric very wrathful, for he saw the structure he had so carefully

built up suddenly threatened with destruction. The alliance and fusion of Goths and Romans he had so earnestly desired now seemed a dream that was rapidly fading away. It was at this moment that he published the edict against the Romans, recorded by the Anonymus Valesii, *ut nullus eorum arma usque ad cultellum uteretur*. Little by little he seemed to lose every vestige of sympathy with the Roman world, and to be again the ferocious barbarian of former days, who had murdered Odovacar with his own hand in the banqueting-hall of Ravenna.

The Romans, however, were not all of the same mind, for some of them, even in the higher ranks of society, remained blindly devoted to the Goths, and—like renegades in general—were intolerant and vindictive. The leader of this party was the Referendary Cyprian, afterwards Count of the Sacred Largesses and Master of the Offices, and who had not only fought in the service of the Goths, but had allowed his own sons to be trained to arms by them and taught to speak their tongue. This was the man who suddenly accused the Patrician Albinus of having secretly written to the Emperor for the purpose of weaving a plot against Theodoric. Albinus positively asserted his innocence of all treasonable attempts; and most probably the matter would have rested there had not the growing agitation among the Romans and the suspicions hotly smouldering in Theodoric's mind been suddenly fanned to flame by the unexpected and voluntary intervention of a personage of great weight and repute.

This was the Senator Boethius, of the illustrious Anician line, who had been the friend of Theodoric, and had eulogised him in the Senate. In 510 he had been named Consul, and, as a most exceptional honour, the same dignity was conferred upon both his sons at the same moment in 522. He was a zealous student of the

ancient philosophers, more especially of Aristotle, on whose *Logic* he wrote a commentary ; and also of Plato and the Neo-Platonics. He had translated mathematical and astrological treatises from the Greek ; he was the author of philosophical and even theological works, and is described by Cassiodorus as an encyclopædic man. "Men had recourse to him," he says, "for the construction of a water clock, and for that of a solar clock (Metz) for the king of the Burgundians ; likewise as to the "selection of a good player on the cithara, to be sent to King Clovis ; furthermore he was required to test by scientific means the value of the coin in which the soldiers were paid." He was a Christian, an admirer of the old Roman spirit, and could be stirred to enthusiasm by a Stoic or Neo-Platonic sentiment. The impulsiveness of his nature was clearly proved by the manner in which he rushed into the perilous discussion as to Albinus's guilt ; for he openly asserted the latter's innocence, declared that Cyprian had falsely accused him, and added that Albinus's opinions were shared by the whole Senate. No plot, he continued, had been hatched, and if there had been one, no senator would have revealed it. Thereupon Cyprian produced false witnesses, who not only swore to the truth of the charge against Albinus, but accused Boethius of the same crime. Both, accordingly, were cast into prison.

The fate of Albinus is not recorded ; but Boethius was tried and condemned by the Senate. The form of his trial is unknown to us ; nor has it been precisely ascertained whether his sentence was pronounced by a committee or by the whole Senate. The latter supposition seems scarcely tenable, if we remember the constant distrust with which all the senators were regarded by Theodoric. Neither do we know the exact nature of the sentence passed on Boethius, who even had he

spoken too daringly against the King, had always frankly and boldly defended his colleagues. Most probably he was condemned by a committee to imprisonment, and later on Theodoric, blinded with rage, arbitrarily substituted for that penalty a cruel and most barbarous death.

It was during his prolonged confinement that Boethius composed the work that has immortalised his name : the "*Consolatio Philosophiæ*," that is really his confession and apology. "Of what am I accused?" he asks. "Of having loved Roman freedom, defended the dignity of the Senate." He declares that his accusers were corrupt, and complains of having been condemned without being previously interrogated by the very Senate whose cause he had championed. "The motive of the charge against me," he continued, "was the hatred I had roused in the fulfilment of my duty, by protesting against the injustice of which the Roman provincials were the victims. The unchastised greed of the barbarians made them hunger more and more every day for the lands of those provincials, hence they frequently desired their heads in order to gain possession of their property. Have I not many times defended and protected these unhappy men from the infinite calumnies of the barbarians who sought to devour them?"

This book, composed in a dungeon, is free from the pompous verbiage of Cassiodorus, is written in sound, pure Latin prose, with occasional interludes of verse, and forms a real hymn to virtue. Yet it was penned in the certain shadow of death, as Theodoric's resentment, already roused to the highest pitch, was naturally goaded to fury by the prisoner's boldness of speech. Boethius openly proclaimed himself the champion of justice and defender of the oppressed, in whose cause he shrank from no sacrifice. "Glory, power, and wealth," he continued,



"are vanities. Virtue alone has value, alone makes mankind really free. God is the supreme good to which the whole universe aspires, and which should also be the philosopher's fixed aim." One of the strangest characteristics of this book, which became enormously popular in the Middle Ages, and was translated into every tongue, is, that were one to read it without knowing its author, it would be difficult to decide whether it was the work of a Pagan or of a Christian. It certainly manifests a heroic courage that might be considered both Pagan and Christian at the same time. One cannot say that it contains anything that is absolutely opposed to Christianity, but it is decidedly surprising that a Christian preparing to meet his death should make no single allusion to Christ, Paradise, or Hell, nor even to the hope of a future life. It would seem to be the language of a Stoic, indeed at one time doubts were raised as to whether Boethius were truly a Christian and really the author of the religious works attributed to him. However, the great popularity of his "*Consolations*" in the Christian world of the Middle Ages rendered it difficult to entertain any doubt of his faith, and in these days historical criticism has entirely swept it away. There is an element in his nature that reminds us of the Italian Neo-Platonics of the fifteenth century, such as Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, in whom Paganism and Christianity seemed to be mingled and fused into a single doctrine. In those days conspirators invoked Brutus as they sharpened their swords to strike tyrants, while at the same time they implored the Madonna to guide their arm and ensure the success of the murderous thrust.

Theodoric finally ordered his captive's execution. A cord was bound tightly round Boethius's head, and twisted so cruelly as to almost force his eyes from their

sockets, and then a heavy blow with a mace released him from his torments (524).

But even this crime failed to satisfy Theodoric, who by this time had lost all self-control. Fearing lest Symmachus, the head of the Senate, also one of the Anician family, and father-in-law to Boethius, should seek to avenge his murdered kinsman, he had him promptly arrested and put to death without any trial. This serves to prove that Albinus and Boethius were not the only Roman patriots in the Senate, and tends to increase our belief that the members of that body would not have been unanimous in condemning one of their colleagues to death for political reasons.

Pope Hormisdas had now been succeeded by Pope John I. (523-526), and as he also rejoiced at the Emperor's persecution of the Arians, Theodoric's fury knew no bounds. Therefore, heedless of strong opposition to his purpose, he compelled the Pope to set out for Constantinople, insisting that he should defend the Arians' cause there and demand the restoration of their churches, threatening severe reprisals in case he refused. So, most unwillingly, the Pope voyaged to the East, where he was welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm. All that he asked for the good of the Catholic Church was readily granted him, but, as might have been expected, he neither obtained, nor cared to obtain anything in favour of the Arians. Therefore, when John returned to Italy the frantically enraged king promptly cast him into prison, where he died on the 25th of May, 526. Then, to secure his own safety, Theodoric brought pressure to bear on the Papal election, and supported the candidate who eventually mounted St. Peter's Chair as Pope Felix III. This roused a storm of ill-feeling against him from all sides. There were signs that the Empire and the Vandals would probably combine and seize the opportunity to

declare war against him at a very early date. But while he was collecting ships and men for his defence with fevered haste he suddenly fell ill and died. This decease, only ninety-seven days after that of Pope John, was regarded by many as a judgment from Heaven, and gave birth to various legends. Procopius relates that one day, when Theodoric was banqueting, a great fish's head was set before him, which glared threateningly at him, gnashed its teeth, and changed into the likeness of the murdered Symmachus. The terror-stricken monarch was seized with violent shiverings and took to his bed, but no amount of coverings could restore natural warmth, and a fierce attack of dysentery ended his life at the age of seventy-two, on the 30th of August, 526. Another tradition, told at a much later date in the "Dialogues" of Gregory the Great, recounts how a tax-collector, chancing to touch at the island of Lipari, met a hermit there who instantly exclaimed, "Theodoric is dead!" "How can that be?" replied the traveller. "I left him in good health a short while ago." "All the same," rejoined the hermit, "I have just seen him pass with his hands fettered, dragged along by Pope John and Symmachus, to be thrown down Vulcan's crater at Lipari." This legend is probably connected with the fact that, some time after the King's death, his body disappeared from the mausoleum where it lay, and no trace of it could be found. In 1854 there was reason to believe that some labourers who were digging at a short distance from the tomb had discovered Theodoric's skeleton buried in the ground. But owing to the dishonesty of the workmen it again vanished, together with the golden cuirass that had also been exhumed, and of which only a few fragments were recovered.

At the time of Theodoric's death his daughter Amalasuntha had recently lost her husband Eutharic, by whom

she had one son named Athalaric who was then about ten years of age. Therefore when Theodoric felt that his last moment was at hand, he summoned the Goth chieftains to his chamber and presented his grandson to them, charging them, Jordanes tells us, "to respect the boy as their king, to love the Roman Senate and people, and likewise to placate the Emperor and win his goodwill: "*Principemque orientalem placatum semperque propitium haberent post Deum.*" Necessarily the widowed Amalasuntha held sovereign rule as regent for her boy. She is said to have been a beautiful woman, and we know that she had received a Roman education, and could speak Latin and Greek as well as the Gothic tongue. Much force of character is also ascribed to her; but in reality she was unfitted to cope with the numerous and serious difficulties of her position. Not only did the Western Empire fall to utter decay in her time, but even the Ostrogoth kingdom was reduced to the verge of ruin.

First of all, too, her succession to the government was not sanctioned by the Emperor, nor was it in legal accordance with Gothic customs. To remedy this irregular state of things, both Goths and Romans were required to swear fealty to Athalaric, and he, in return, had to vow fidelity to them and to the Senate. "*Furat per quem juratis,*" so said Cassiodorus (viii. 3), who was now more powerful at Court than before, being Master of the Offices, Questor, and afterwards Prætorian Prefect, so that, as he said of himself, "*Erat solus ad universa sufficiens*" (ix. 25). Amalasuntha seemed disposed to follow a mild and conciliatory policy, without deviating too far from the course her father had adopted in the first years of his reign. She gave back the confiscated estates of Boethius and Symmachus to their respective families; although, by an odd contradiction, she still favoured the adverse party. Cyprian, for instance, the slanderous accuser of

Albinus and Boethius, retained all his dignities. Under Amalasuntha's rule Romans were promoted to high rank in the army, and Goths became members of the Senate.<sup>1</sup>

The Ostrogoth's scheme of a great barbarian confederation under his own royal presidency had now vanished in smoke. Italy stood isolated, therefore the Eastern Empire had the game in its own hand, and hastened to profit by the situation. Meanwhile Amalasuntha had made Cassiodorus write to the Emperor in Athalaric's name to the following effect : " My grandsire was exalted by Honorius to the dignity of Consul ; my father was adopted by yourself *per arma filius*, a title that were even better fitted to a youth of my age " (viii. 1). But nothing could be obtained from Justin, who, on the contrary, was already preparing to make a descent on South Italy, so that Cassiodorus had to hurry off from Ravenna precisely at that time in order to call his people to arms for the defence of the coast. The Gepidæ were threatening the northern frontier, while in the interior there was serious discontent among the Goths, who were bitterly indignant because the youthful Athalaric was being educated in the Roman instead of the Gothic fashion, and trained to letters rather than to arms. In 527 Justin shared his Imperial power with his nephew Justinian, and at his death, four months afterwards (August 1, 527), the latter succeeded him on the throne. The new Emperor was a far better statesman than his uncle, and of remarkable intellect as well as ambition. He promptly recognised Athalaric as Theodoric's successor and Amalasuntha as regent, not from any affection towards either, but merely to secure their friendship while arranging an expedition against the Vandals. That war once brought to an end he could then plan his attack upon Italy. In the mean-

<sup>1</sup> Cassiodorus, viii. 6, 9, 10, 11 ; xi. 1.



time he rejoiced at the rising malcontent of the Goths, since it paved the way for his interference and would furnish him with some pretext for beginning hostilities. The Goth chieftains were already quarrelling with their Queen on the subject of her son's education. Theodoric, so they protested, had rightly declared that one who feared his teacher's whip could never dare to meet the foeman's sword. So one day when the child burst into tears because either his mother or his preceptor had slapped him in the face, the Goth lords raised such a clamour of indignation that Amalasuntha was obliged to pacify them by consigning her boy to the military chiefs, who gave him a soldierly training and taught him to love women, wine, and horses. In consequence of this sudden change of *régime*, the poor lad took to vicious ways, his health failed, alarming symptoms set in, and it was soon seen that his life was drawing to an end.

There was another grandson of Theodoric's in Italy named Theodahad, the son of Amalafrida by her first marriage with a Goth. Being left a widow, she had afterwards married Thrasamund, the king of the Vandals, but both were now dead. Theodahad had also received a Roman training, and having become a devoted student of Latin literature and Plato's philosophy, was little liked by the Goths. Yet, in accordance with the national custom, he was entitled, as Theodoric's sister's son, to succeed to the crown, in case of Athalaric's death—an event that was only too probable. Theodahad was ambitious, grasping, and had made himself detested by the Romans by his tyrannous deeds. Theodoric had given him vast estates in Tuscany, which, by stratagem and violence, he had enlarged to so great an extent as to make himself absolute lord of nearly the whole of that central region. Amalasuntha had been forced to put a stop to his unwarrantable acts of spoliation; consequently Theodahad

was her determined foe, and had begun to plot against her at Constantinople.

Meanwhile the Goths' hatred towards their Queen assumed so threatening a character that she was compelled to banish to the frontiers three of the more powerful and turbulent chiefs. Even then she felt her position to be so hazardous that she also turned to Justinian for help, counting on his gratitude for the great services she had rendered him—as will be related farther on—in his war with the Vandals in 533. She contemplated seeking refuge at his Court, and continuing to rule Italy under his orders. Naturally, Justinian accepted the proposal, and hastened to prepare a splendid habitation for her at Durazzo (Dyrrachium), whither she sent ships loaded with 40,000 *aurei* from the royal treasury. But Amalasuntha was a very changeable woman, and having succeeded at that juncture in ridding herself of the exiled Goths, she recalled the treasure ships and suddenly renounced all idea of leaving Italy.

Thereupon Justinian, being puzzled by her behaviour, despatched three ambassadors to discover her real intentions (534). He had now conquered the Vandals, and was preparing for his Italian campaign. During the late war he had asked Amalasuntha to let him occupy the Sicilian fortress of Lilybæum (Marsala), and he now renewed the same request. This fortress had been given to Amalafrida as her dowry; and the Goths maintained that at her death it reverted by right to their nation. Justinian contended, on the other hand, that since he had overcome the Vandals the fortress belonged to him, and he demanded it with the greater persistence, knowing that its possession might be most useful to him when he began to make war upon Italy. Amalasuntha was quite disposed to give it up to him, but, fearing the anger of her people, delayed her decision.

On the 2nd of October, 534, Athalaric ceased to breathe, and Amalasuntha was in a new and most embarrassing position. She could not be an actual Queen, since that was forbidden by the Gothic laws; she could no longer be regent, now that her son was dead; neither could she treat with Justinian in her own name. She recognised the necessity of applying to Theodahad, and she asked him to assume the government of Italy in partnership with herself. Thus she hoped to satisfy him with a shadow of power, while he, on the contrary, intended to speedily grasp the whole substance of it. Meanwhile high-flown, wordy epistles were written in their name by Cassiodorus, to inform the Emperor of this new union: "Even as the human body hath two ears, two eyes, and two hands, so the kingdom of the Goths hath now two sovereigns." Also in other letters from the same pen, they eulogised each other to the Emperor and the Senate. It would seem that Justinian, thinking that little opposition was to be feared from two weak and inharmonious sovereigns, showed a disposition to recognise their accession without raising difficulties. Theodahad, however, already weary of playing a subordinate part, contrived to hold Amalasuntha captive in a palace on the Lake of Bolsena, and soon had her strangled there in her bath (535) by the kinsmen of the Goth chiefs she had caused to be murdered. Procopius asserts in his "*Anecdota*" that Amalasuntha was done to death at the instigation of the Empress Theodora, who dreaded her taking refuge at Constantinople, lest the Emperor should succumb to her charms. Theodahad, for his own part, professed his entire innocence of the crime; but no one believed him, especially when it was found that he had rewarded the assassins. Meanwhile it was Justinian who profited most by the foul deed. The moment Amalasuntha was imprisoned he protested against the outrage, declaring

that the Queen was under his protection. Then, on hearing of her murder, he assumed the part of an avenger of justice, and asserted his full right to begin the war against Theodahad and the Ostrogoths, according to his long-meditated plan.

## CHAPTER V

### JUSTINIAN AND BELISARIUS—THE VANDAL WAR— THE BEGINNING OF THE GOTH WAR

WE are now obliged to go back to an earlier period in order to give some account of the Emperor who played so preponderant a part in Italian affairs.

Justinian was born in Dardania in the year 482 or 483, educated and trained at Constantinople on the Greco-Roman system. In 521 he was appointed Consul by his uncle, the Emperor Justin. This event was celebrated by the most extravagant festivities, costing 280,000 gold pieces (*aurei*), and for which twenty lions, thirty panthers, and other savage beasts were used. This was the first exhibition of the splendid luxury which Justinian always affected, partly for his own pleasure, and partly as a useful means of enhancing his prestige and popularity. In 527 he was raised by his uncle to partnership in the Empire, and succeeded him on the throne shortly afterwards. He was undoubtedly possessed of great talents, he had a lofty conception of the Empire, and wished to restore its sway over the West. He showed an admirable power of intuition in the choice of the best instruments for carrying his designs into effect. This was proved by his selecting first Belisarius, and secondly Narses, who, at sixty years of age, was placed at the head of an army, for the first time in his life, and made a most excellent general. The same



fortunate acumen was displayed in fixing upon Tribonian and other learned men to compile the "*Corpus Juris*," and in choosing his architects for the erection of the wonderful church of St. Sophia. But he had no administrative faculty, for he squandered huge sums on public works, in the building of numerous fortresses, and in perpetual wars. Hence he was compelled to overburden the people with taxes, thus provoking much discontent, which, added to the continual lack of money, sometimes ruined his best-planned schemes. Also he was blindly enamoured of a beautiful but disastrous woman, of the Lady-Hamilton species, who was dissolute, cruel, and unboundedly arrogant. This was Theodora, the child of a keeper of wild beasts at the Amphitheatre. She is said to have become a public prostitute after her father's death, and to have appeared entirely naked on the stage. After various wanderings about the world, she then returned to Constantinople, and was taken to wife by Justinian, who, on ascending the throne, insisted on raising her to the position of Empress Regnant. From that moment, however, she kept her passions under control, led a decorous life, and proved herself a woman of great mental power and remarkable courage.

Our principal and most weighty authority concerning the whole of this period is Procopius, who accompanied Belisarius in all his campaigns, and has described them in an accurate and valuable Diary. Later on he produced another work, known either by the name of "*Storia Arcana*," or "*Anecdota*," displaying a hatred of Justinian and Theodora, of which there is no trace in his previous history. Apparently he felt able to write with a freer pen after those personages were dead, and therefore not only spoke far more plainly, but sometimes came to very exaggerated conclusions.

Justinian's chief fame in after generations is founded on

his legislative achievements. Various Commissioners of his own nomination, with Tribonian as their president, collected, arranged, and condensed all the sources of Roman law, also adding to it a Manual ("Institutiones") for younger students, and thus formed the "Corpus Juris" that is Justinian's chief title to glory. The first work the Commissioners produced was the Code ("Codex Constitutionem") a collection of Imperial rescripts in twelve books; but their most important work was that known as the "Digest" or "Pandects." This was a summary of all the works of the classic authorities in jurisprudence, setting forth their opinions upon "Leges" and "Senatus-consulta," and the summary occasionally included precious extracts from the original text. It was a truly stupendous work, and the fifty books into which it is divided give the essence of no less than two thousand volumes. The whole undertaking was begun and completed between the years 530 and 533. The ruling idea throughout the "Corpus Juris" is that of the absolute authority of the Emperor with a co-ordinating and centralising spirit, characteristic of a period that lacked—as plainly shown in its philosophy and theology—all productive originality of mind. Much blame attaches to Justinian for the excessive religious zeal that moved him to suppress the school of Greek philosophy at Athens, since although already on the wane, it still retained its ancient name and its store of glorious traditions.

In spite of his eminent qualities and the great works he achieved, Justinian's bad administration, lavish extravagance, and oppressive taxation soon produced a widespread disaffection. Likewise a heated religious controversy was being waged between the Monophysites, who enjoyed the protection of the Empress, and the Orthodox party, supported by the Emperor. All this presently led to a fierce revolt, which first broke out at

the Hippodrome, where the populace was already split into two camps, *i.e.*, that of the Blues, favouring the Monophysites, and the Greens, favouring the Orthodox believers. The same factions were then dividing and upsetting all the principal cities of the Empire; while in Constantinople their riots had become positively formidable. The Emperor was publicly insulted at the Hippodrome in indecently violent terms, particularly by the Blues, who charged him with partiality to the Greens, vituperating him as a thief, a traitor, and a fool. By way of asserting his impartiality, he had a few criminals of either faction put to death, but this only stirred both to join against him. The revolution that ensued was named the *Nika* (victory) from the password adopted by the temporarily united parties. During the revolt a great fire broke out, which raged for five days and caused enormous destruction. As the mob also proclaimed a new Emperor, Justinian believed farther resistance impossible, and was on the point of forsaking Constantinople and his throne. Theodora, however, displayed the virile strength of her character. "Rather die at once and for all," she exclaimed to her spouse; "to drag on existence as a fugitive prince is not life. Fly, if thou wilt; I refuse to live if stripped of the purple!" Then the youthful Belisarius was summoned to quell the revolt, and conducted operations so vigorously that, so it was said, 35,000 persons were put to the sword. Hypatius, the new Emperor chosen by the rebels, was also killed, and Justinian safely replaced on his throne (532), thanks to Theodora and Belisarius. The Byzantine Empire was a curious medley, not only of Greeks and Romans, but of many incongruous nationalities, such as Bulgarians, Slaves, Turks, Finns, Armenians, Persians, Egyptians, and even Moors. But all these peoples, of different races, customs, creeds, and tongues, with no bond of

nationality between them, were all bound together by the grip of Roman law and discipline. This remarkable fact is further emphasised by the prolonged duration of the Eastern Empire, which survived to the middle of the fifteenth century, while so many other States had crumbled to ruin. As the head of the government and of the Church, the Eastern Emperor had the complete disposal of a centralised and powerful bureaucracy, of a keen-witted diplomatic body, and of a valiant army that, during Justinian's reign, was said to amount to 150,000 men. This host was chiefly composed of Thracian, Tauridian, and Wallachian mountaineers, and although it was not invariably equal to its fame, often gave splendid proofs of bravery, and boasted a series of commanders of truly exceptional merit. It was the custom with all these generals, as with Belisarius, who was certainly one of the greatest of them, to have a special bodyguard, consisting of several thousand picked warriors, who were in their private service and pay. The navy, which was manned by natives of Asia Minor, Thrace, and Greece, likewise maintained its honourable reputation for a long period.

Justinian acquired great historical importance through the firmness of his endeavours to revive the ancient splendour and ancient unity of the Empire, by initiating a strong reaction of Romanism *versus* Teutonism. This reaction was triumphant in fact for some time, until the failure of trade and industry, the disaffection produced by exorbitant taxation and fiscal oppression, together with the jealousy and corruption of the Court, which continually fostered discord among the leaders of the army, ruined the work that had made so glorious a beginning and had been likewise so favoured by fortune. Belisarius was the chief instrument of this Imperial enterprise. Like Justin and Justinian, he was born in Dardania (505), and, joining the army at a very early age, soon gave

proofs of signal valour in the war against Persia (530), when, with only 25,000 men, he routed 40,000 foes. On the conclusion of peace he returned to Constantinople; and, as we have seen, in time to quell the revolution of 532. He was already married to Antonina, a woman much older than himself, and of much the same stamp as the Empress Theodora. She, too, was the child of Circus folk, had twice been a mother before becoming the wife of Belisarius, was dissolute, energetic, intriguing. She accompanied her husband on all his campaigns, and exercised a great influence over him that was often most pernicious to his interests.

Justinian's cherished aim was the reconquest of Italy by the Empire; but in order to succeed in this it was necessary to secure his rear by overthrowing the Vandals and resuming possession of Africa. The internecine disorders and consequent weakness of the Vandal kingdom on that continent were about the same that we have seen occurring in Italy. In 523 Hilderic had succeeded to the throne. He had no aptitude for war, and had imbibed from his mother Eudoxia, the daughter of Valentinian III., a certain amount of sympathy for the Roman Orthodox Church. This provoked in the Vandals a new outburst of barbaric Asian fanaticism that led to a revolution, of which Theodoric's sister, Amalfrida, the widow of Thrasumund, Hilderic's predecessor, was the leading spirit. The rebellion was repressed, and Amalfrida was thrown into prison and held captive until Theodoric's death, when, being now defenceless, she was promptly killed. Therefore the deepest hatred was smouldering between the Ostrogoths and Vandals, and this proved advantageous to Justinian, who rightly hoped that the former would help him against the latter. But Hilderic's reign was brief, for the Vandals drove him from the throne, and chose in his stead the bellicose and anti-



Roman Gelimer (531). But Justinian profited even by this change, for he instantly declared war on the Vandals, under the pretext of defending Hilderic's just claims, as well as the latter's orthodox Roman opinions.

Accordingly a strongly equipped fleet finally sailed from Constantinople, with an army of 10,000 foot and 5,000 or 6,000 horse, chiefly composed of Thracians. This force was commanded by Belisarius, accompanied by his wife and by the secretary Procopius, who had also been with him in Persia. The valiant Armenian captain, Joannes, was second in command to Belisarius. After a two months' voyage of storm and peril, they put into Catania, and, by the favour of the Ostrogoths, were allowed to disembark. They learnt then that the Vandals were so totally ignorant of their movements that Gelimer's brother had been sent to Sardinia on a military expedition. Accordingly the fleet received orders to put to sea, and Belisarius landed on the African coast at nine days' march from Carthage. He did not assume the attitude of a conqueror, but came, he said, as the deliverer of the Catholics and Romans, the clergy and lay proprietors, who were all equally oppressed by those foreign barbarians, the heretic Vandals. He most strictly commanded his soldiery to respect life and property, and, being favoured by the masses, was able to carry on the war with considerable success. The first battle was fought on the 13th of September, and he won the victory, although greatly outnumbered by the foe. On the 15th he entered Carthage, and took up his quarters in Gelimer's palace, inviting all his chief officers to share in a banquet that the Vandal king had ordered the previous day for himself and his friends, to celebrate his own expected triumph.

Gelimer then withdrew to Numidia, and being quickly joined there by his brother from Sardinia, delivered a

second battle, in which he was again defeated. After witnessing the rout of his forces and the loss of his brother, he took refuge with the Moors, and endured cruel hardships of every kind. Legend relates that he was reduced to such extremity as to implore Belisarius to send him a morsel of bread, having tasted none for long, together with a sponge to bathe his eyes, which were worn out by much weeping, and a lyre in order to soothe his harassed spirit with song. In March, 534, he finally surrendered, and was then received with great honour by Belisarius.

The most notable result of this war was that after all the terror and destruction they had wreaked on the Empire, the Vandals now disappeared altogether from history and were heard of no more. The rapidity of their overthrow must have been mainly due, as we have previously observed, to their badly constituted and oppressive government. Many of them were relegated to the borders of the Empire, in the direction of Persia; a considerable number were incorporated in Belisarius's army, and a few were actually admitted into the ranks of his own guards. Those who elected to remain in Africa had their property confiscated, were driven from their churches, thrown into prison, or reduced to slavery.

But the general's promptly achieved triumph was quickly followed by manifestations of jealousy and discord, which were always the gnawing worms at the heart of the Byzantine Court. After the apparently miraculous success that had crowned his three months' campaign, Belisarius was justly entitled to gratitude and honourable rewards, but, on the contrary, he was now cruelly wounded by the stings of malicious envy and slander. His calumniators had accused him to the Emperor of reckless ambition, asserting that he intended to play the king, having dared to take his seat on

Gelimer's throne. Accordingly Justinian became suspicious, and ordered him to forward all the prisoners to Constantinople without delay, whereupon Belisarius decided to go there in person to refute his calumniators' charges. His return to the city was a really triumphal entry, for he placed his captives, King Gelimer included, at the head of the procession, together with loads of most valuable spoil; for the booty he brought included the precious objects belonging to the Temple of Jerusalem, which Titus had carried off to Rome, and Genseric, in his turn, from Rome to Africa. Justinian, conceiving the fear that these sacred things might bring misfortune upon him, as on the Romans and Vandals, restored them to their original habitation. Africa had been left to a governor's care, and now a host of officials were despatched there, who set to work to drain the life-blood of the land by grievous taxation.

The Emperor's thoughts now recurred to his old plans for the conquest of Italy. The murder of Amalafrida, by exciting animosity between the Ostrogoths and Vandals had already given him a pretext for one war. So now, the overthrow of the Vandals having made him master of Africa, he demanded the fortress of Lilybæum (Marsala) in Sicily more insistently than before; while Amalasuntha, as we saw, hesitated about ceding it, dreading to farther offend thereby the national pride of the Goths who already disliked her so bitterly. However, when after Athalaric's death (534), Theodahad first held her captive and then caused her to be murdered (535), Justinian having promised to protect her, now declared his intention of avenging her death, and decided to make war.

Amalasuntha was assassinated in the spring, and by the summer a body of 3,000 or 4,000 men had already sailed from Constantinople to attack the Goths in Dal-

matia. Thus the latter were compelled to divide their forces, and it became easier to vanquish them in Italy, especially as Belisarius was already on his way thither with an army of 7,500 men, in addition to his own guards. This army, also chiefly composed of Thracian, Georgian, and Isaurian (Lycaonian) mountaineers, soon performed prodigies of valour.

Belisarius, its commander, told Procopius one day that his victories were mainly owed to the cavalry which he had reorganised on a new plan. He had noticed that the Goth cavalry were only armed with swords and javelins, and were chiefly employed in shielding the foot soldiers when the latter were struggling with the enemy at close quarters. He had therefore determined that the main strength of his army should consist of mounted archers, and trained his cavalry to this new mode of fighting. Nevertheless, in spite of his personal valour, infinite skill, and excellent strategy, this general could not have achieved the wonderful success he obtained with the small though very daring force at his disposal, without the help of the Romans. But with great shrewdness he had quickly won their goodwill, by announcing that he came to deliver them from the barbarian yoke, and from the Arian persecution, and also for the purpose of restoring Rome to her ancient grandeur.

Accordingly, as soon as he landed in Sicily, all gates were opened to him, and he easily traversed the length and breadth of the island without meeting any serious resistance, excepting at Palermo, which had fortified walls and was strongly garrisoned by Goths. Belisarius then ordered a few transport vessels to enter the port, and the soldiers, climbing to the mast-heads, shot storms of arrows down into the city to the huge surprise and consternation of the garrison which soon made surrender. In seven months Sicily was won back to the Empire. On hearing

of these events Theodahad was so terrified that he was ready to yield at once, actually offering to renounce his kingdom in return for a large pension. But no sooner was his proposal accepted than intelligence came of a reverse sustained by the Imperial force in Dalmatia, so he instantly changed his mind and refused to surrender the crown. Shortly after, towards the close of 535, the Imperials regained all the Dalmatian territory they had lost and occupied Salona, the Spalato of modern times. Justinian then refused to grant terms or make any bargain with Theodahad. Henceforth the whole decision was inexorably left to the hazard of war.

At this moment, however, Belisarius was unexpectedly called back to Africa, where the tyranny and incapacity of those charged with the government had provoked a formidable revolt led by a certain man named Stutza who seemed to intend forming an independent state and commanded a force of 8,000 rebels and about 1,000 Vandals. The life of the Imperial governor being seriously endangered, and the position growing daily more threatening, he hastened with Procopius to Sicily to consult Belisarius, who started for Africa without a moment's delay and marched into Carthage just in time to prevent its capture by the rebels. The news of his unexpected arrival inspired them with such mortal terror that they instantly retreated fifty miles from the city and were presently overtaken by Belisarius, who attacked and thoroughly routed them with his small force of 2,000 men. Then, on learning that another brave general, fitted to maintain settled order in those provinces, was already on the way from Constantinople, he returned to Sicily, and after establishing small garrisons at Syracuse and Palermo crossed over to the mainland.

There, too, he was enabled to advance swiftly, aided only by the popular favour, deserters from the Goths,



who throughout the whole of this campaign often joined his ranks. At Naples, however, both garrison and inhabitants showed their intention of making a stubborn resistance; and when Belisarius parleyed with the headmen of the people and tried to induce them to surrender, he found that both they and the Goths were determined to hold out to the last. Even the Jews, who had worked hard in provisioning the city, made a brave stand at one of the gates. Therefore this Roman or Italian population—whichever we like to call it—which many writers declared to be extinct, were a fighting people, and still had to be reckoned with on the battlefield. Theodahad meanwhile remained at a safe distance, and refused to send any of the urgently demanded reinforcements. As the legend runs, he sought to read the future by a peculiar mode of divination. He placed three batches of ten hogs in three different styes respectively marked as Goths, Romans, and Imperials. After an interval of ten days, he opened the three styes and found that all the "Goths," excepting two, were dead; that half of the "Romans" had perished, and the surviving five had shed all their bristles, but that all the "Imperials" were still alive. Hence he inferred that the Goths would be defeated and the Imperials would win the victory with the aid of the Romans, half of the latter losing their life, and the other half their property. This clearly shows that even legend records that the Romans took part in the war—a fact that frequently emerges even from the narrative of Procopius, although this Greek writer always tries to attenuate its importance by his slighting allusions to the Romans. At all events Naples held out so firmly that even Belisarius despaired of success and was about to raise the siege, when he learned that the city might be secretly entered through certain disused aqueducts. Accordingly while he made a feint against

the walls on the opposite side to distract the enemy's attention, a body of 600 men forced a passage through the aqueducts, made a sudden rush to the city gates, killed the soldiers guarding them and threw them open to their comrades waiting outside. Thereupon the army poured in and began killing and plundering ; but Belisarius put a stop to the sack by threatening his men with the severest punishment. So the Imperial troops were masters of Naples and captured the 800 Goths who had defended its walls.

During this time Theodahad's cowardly behaviour had stirred every one in Rome to a frenzy of wrath. Accordingly the Goths of the Campagna deposed him and elected Witigis in his stead, who soon contrived to compass his death. The new king next divorced his wife in order to wed a daughter of Amalasuntha, in the vain hope of thus obtaining Justinian's friendship or, at least, his neutrality. But at this juncture the quarrel could be only decided by the sword : no alternative remained. The election of Witigis, which Cassiodorus, in his usual grandiose manner, proclaimed to all as the result of "heavenly grace and the will of the people freely expressed in the open country," proved by no means a fortunate choice. Witigis was a brave warrior, but neither a statesman nor even a skilled leader, and he was pitted against the greatest general of the age. First of all he withdrew from Rome, leaving a garrison of 4,000 men, and retreated on Ravenna in order to collect all his forces there.

He never reflected on the extraordinary moral effect that would be caused by the entry of Belisarius into the ancient capital of the world. That general would appear more than ever as the Empire's deliverer and would be the virtual master of Italy ! Witigis meanwhile was at Ravenna and endeavouring at all costs to arrange a peace

with the Franks whom Justinian had tried to stir against him in order to be thus enabled to attack the Goths from three different quarters at once, *i.e.*, from Gaul, Dalmatia, and Southern Italy. Hence Witigis, in order to be able to recall his troops from Gaul and thus reinforce his own army in Italy without having to meet simultaneous attacks on all sides, ceded Provence and Dauphiny to them and even stooped to pay a tribute of 2,000 pounds in gold. All this was a cruel humiliation to him, but the danger was pressing and there was no time to be lost.

With Belisarius, on the contrary, all was going well. Pope Silverius, in spite of his professed fidelity to Theodahad and Witigis, now invited him to come to Rome. Accordingly, leaving only 300 men to garrison Naples, the general advanced on Rome, passing through Cassino by the way, welcomed as usual by all the inhabitants of the region, and with his forces increased by desertions from the Gothic army. On the 9th or 10th of December, 536, he entered Rome, unopposed, by the Asinaria Gate while the Goths were pouring out of it by the Porta Flaminia. Thus, says Procopius, Rome was restored to the Empire after sixty years of barbarian rule. Belisarius established his quarters on the Pincian Hill and, after glancing at the city stretched beneath and which still possessed nearly all its ancient monuments, he immediately gave orders that it should be promptly provisioned and its defences repaired and strengthened. For the walls of Rome were over 260 years old, and having been erected by Aurelian and Probus, restored by Honorius 130 years later, and utterly neglected ever since, were now in a more or less ruinous state.

Meanwhile Witigis had been diligently collecting near Ravenna all available forces, and having succeeded in assembling an army of 150,000 men, now advanced upon Rome (537). On nearing the Salarian bridge (Ponte

Salario), the soldiers of the small garrison Belisarius had stationed there, were seized with such panic at the sight of the Gothic host, that the barbarians among them deserted to the foe, while others fled and dispersed. Before news came of the approach of Witigis's formidable army a thousand men had been sent to reinforce the little garrison, but on meeting the preponderating forces of the Goths were forced to retreat. Thereupon Belisarius, warned of the peril, rushed to their aid, and hurled himself into the *mêlée*. His steed having a star-shaped tuft of white hair on its head was named *Phalion* by the Greeks and *Balan* by the Goths. The moment the latter recognised the general by his horse, all their blows were aimed at him, but by some miracle he remained untouched. After being repulsed for a while by his furious onset, the Goths were reinforced and returned to the charge in such numbers that the Imperial troops had to effect a somewhat hurried retreat to the Salarian Gate. But it was closed against them, nor could they get it opened, for the Romans feared lest friends and foes should rush in together. Besides, darkness was falling, and it was rumoured that Belisarius was slain; accordingly, when he hurried forward with his men and, all begrimed and disfigured by his lengthy struggle, shouted to the guards to let him in, they failed to recognise their chief and refused to obey. It was a critical moment, but the dauntless general was equal to the emergency. Perceiving the imminence of the danger, with the Goths close on his heels, he took one of those swift and daring resolutions which remind us of Garibaldi, and, hastily addressing his men, re-formed them in compact order about him and charged his pursuers with such unexpected and irresistible fury, that they fled in dismay, believing that fresh troops had issued from the gate. Then, at last, Belisarius entered the city at the head of his soldiery and was welcomed with clamorous rejoicing.

## CHAPTER VI

ROME BESIEGED BY THE GOTHS—THE BYZANTINES  
ENTER RAVENNA IN TRIUMPH.

Now began the longest siege of Rome known to history. It lasted from the beginning of March, 537, to the latter end of March, 538, *i.e.*, one year and nine days, during which time Belisarius gave countless proofs of his military genius and valour. He had started from Constantinople with an army of 7,500 men, exclusive of his own guards, but had suffered many losses by the way, and particularly during the sieges of Palermo and Naples. Also, he had been obliged to leave garrisons in the principal cities of Southern Italy ; and therefore—according to Procopius—had now to hold a city twelve miles in circumference with a force of only 5,000 men. To so small a body, resistance would have been impossible against 150,000 besiegers, but for the efficient co-operation of the Roman people. And the fact of this Roman co-operation is clearly proved by what Procopius says himself, although, as usual, he tries to conceal it. Undoubtedly the valiant general relied chiefly on his regular troops in all great emergencies, and for the defence of dangerous points ; but the Romans took a prominent part in guarding the walls. Fortunately these had been already repaired, although somewhat hurriedly, save the portion near the Flaminian Gate (now Porta del Popolo), known by the name of the



Crooked Wall (*Muro torto*). This was extremely solid, and was generally believed to be under the special protection of St. Peter ; therefore the foe never ventured to attack it.

The Goths completely surrounded the city, establishing their forces in seven encampments, facing the principal gates, and one of these divisions was planted across the Tiber, in the so-called Camp of Nero. Both besiegers and besieged employed numberless stratagems against the enemy. First of all Witigis cut the great aqueducts, thus reducing the Romans to the water supplied by their wells, and depriving them of the power required to work their corn mills. Thereupon Belisarius caused floating mills to be moored between the arches of the Ælian Bridge (now Ponte St. Angelo), and elsewhere on the Tiber, so that the wheels were turned by the force of the current. Then the Goths threw logs, beams, and even the carcasses of men and animals to obstruct the machinery, and make the water more poisonous. But this device was partly foiled by stretching chains across the river. The Goths, however, were not easily discouraged, and employed many other tricks of war. They invented wheeled towers drawn by oxen, to be dragged near enough to the walls for their soldiers to scale them. But when these towers were within range of Pincian Gate, Belisarius ordered his archers to aim at the oxen, and these being killed, the lumbering machines remained stranded in the open Campagna. At the same time the enemy tried to storm the ramparts at other points, and made a specially vigorous attack on the double wall flanking Porta Prænestina (now Porta Maggiore). But after successfully scaling the outer line, the Goths were massed with their engines of war in the space between this and the inner wall that had still to be won. Hearing what had happened, Belisarius rushed to the spot, and issuing from the gate took the foe in the

rear, while his bowmen on the wall fired into them point-blank. Then the Goths fled in disorder, abandoning all their towers, rams, and other engines, all of which were burnt by the Romans. Meanwhile the ~~foe~~<sup>Goths</sup> delivered another attack on the opposite bank of the Tiber, near Hadrian's tomb (now Castel St. Angelo), which in those days was still faced with white marble, and crowned with numerous statues, although already converted into a citadel. At first the Goths seemed about to carry it by storm, but the garrison, perceiving the danger, hurled down the statues on their assailants to such excellent effect as to speedily drive them off. Procopius declares that 30,000 Goths perished in this attack, and although the number may be exaggerated, at any rate it proves that their losses were severe. Belisarius wrote to Constantinople that it was truly miraculous for his small force of 5,000 men to have opposed so successful a resistance to a host numbering 150,000. Now, however, reinforcements must be sent without delay, otherwise a catastrophe might occur at any moment. So far the Romans had been friendly and helpful, but what might not happen if, wearied out by the continued hardships and dangers of the siege, and the enormous taxes exacted from them, they should change their minds and go over to the Goths?

In fact things were becoming very critical for Rome and its Byzantine defenders. Witigis sent orders to Ravenna that the Senators held as hostages there should be killed; he also seized Portus, which Belisarius had been forced to leave unprotected, being unable to spare the 300 men required to garrison its walls. But the loss of it was a serious matter, since Portus was the harbour whence it was easiest to ship supplies to Rome up the Tiber. Ostia was much less convenient for that purpose. Therefore, there began to be a scarcity of food in the city, and it was necessary to get rid of useless mouths. All able-bodied

citizens were divided into bands and employed to watch the walls, while a certain number were actually enrolled in the army. But these citizen bands were frequently moved from place to place, and they were continually mustered for the roll-call, likewise the keys of the city gates were occasionally changed, as necessary precautions against treachery, now that increased hardship produced signs of public discontent. Although the Romans in general had long adopted the Christian religion, nevertheless a few of them, bewildered by the calamities in which they were now plunged, secretly attempted to open the doors of the temple of Janus, to implore the aid of the Pagan god, who had always protected their forefathers. But the long-closed bronze doors had become so rusted that they could be barely thrust ajar.

Finally a reinforcement arrived of 1,600 horse, chiefly composed of Huns; so this succour and the hope of soon receiving more, had such an encouraging effect on the besieged, that they began to make skirmishing sallies which were invariably successful, in spite of the superior strength of the foe. Accordingly they became so self-confident as to insist on marching out *en masse* to give battle to the Goths—a plan energetically opposed by Belisarius, on account of the small number of his regular forces. But the impatience of his soldiers could no longer be restrained, they were getting out of hand, and he was obliged to grant their prayer. Accordingly he ordered a general sortie from the Salarian and Pincian Gates; while from the Aurelian Gate (Porta S. Pancrazio) a feigned attack was delivered in the direction of Nero's Camp, in order to prevent the large body of Goths stationed at that point from crossing the river to reinforce their comrades on the real field of battle. But as no reliance could be placed on the untrained volunteers of the working class who were anxious to join in the feint, they were ordered

to stand at arms without moving, for the purpose of impressing the foes by a great show of strength. In the real struggle, on the other side of the river, Belisarius meant to use cavalry alone, for he knew it to be his strongest and best-disciplined arm, and had carefully excluded all untrained citizens from its ranks. But at the last moment he was forced to yield to the insistence of the infantry, who panted for a share in the fight. This change of plan nearly ruined everything.

At the beginning of the battle the Roman advance was successful, while on the other side of the city the Goths in Trastevere began to retreat on perceiving how large a force of infantry was massed outside the Aurelian Gate. Then, however, the footmen who had been forbidden to move, disregarded orders and pressed forward; but instead of pursuing the foe, stayed to sack their deserted camp, thus giving the Goths time to re-form, and put the plundering Romans to flight. Also, on the other side of the city, when the tide of battle turned and the Byzantine cavalry were compelled to retreat before an overwhelming host of advancing Goths, the infantry, that should have served as their supports, broke and fled. Their captains, however, who had insisted on leading the infantry to battle, fortunately retrieved the honour of the force by fighting like heroes. With a band of picked men they checked the pursuit for a while, at the cost of their lives, and thus managed to cover the Romans' retreat.

By the time the Goths reached the edge of the moat they found the ramparts so thickly garnished with soldiery that they quickly withdrew. So the day was saved, but the grave danger incurred proved that Belisarius had been justified in trying to avoid a pitched battle with such an overwhelmingly superior foe. Accordingly he returned to the old system of frequent skirmishes, and these again proved successful, and often assumed heroic proportions.

Meanwhile fresh supplies of provisions were pouring into Rome from Ostia. The Goths could not intercept them, for, the circuit of the walls being so extensive, it was easy for the Romans to distract the enemy's attention by a skirmish at this or that point, while stores were coming in at some distant gate.

In June, 537, the third month of the siege, and the second year of the war, intelligence was received that a band of one hundred men from Constantinople had reached Terracina with the money required for the soldiers' pay. This was a matter of the highest importance, so, in order to cover the entry of this succour, Belisarius ordered two simultaneous sorties to be made, which were converted into very vigorous engagements. The Goths were easily worsted in the attack that took place beyond the Tiber, near the Neronian Camp. But outside the Pincian Gate there was a very hard struggle, and the guards of Belisarius showed their dauntless bravery and dash in episodes of a truly Homeric kind. There was a Thracian captain who continued to fight with a javelin through his head; while another was equally heedless of an arrow that pierced him between the nose and eye. The first of these heroes died of his wound, but the second recovered after the arrow had been cut out. The leader of the fight across the river succumbed to the numerous injuries he had received. All these details are gleaned from Procopius, who adds that no less than seventy-seven actions had already been fought by this third month of the siege.

Witigis now adopted a new device by planting a camp of 7,000 men three miles outside the walls of Rome, where two aqueducts crossed and recrossed each other, thus creating a fortified position well adapted to impede the passage of supplies into the city. It is certain that the besieged were now cruelly pressed by famine, and in



their despair the Romans once more insisted on sallying forth to conquer or die. But Belisarius again opposed a decided refusal, and tried to calm the citizens by assuring them that stores of provisions and fresh reinforcements would speedily come; in fact he despatched Procopius to Naples to discover what succour had arrived there. This proved to consist of 500 soldiers with loads of provisions, so the secretary instantly sent all off to Rome, together with some troops already in Campania.

But although Procopius's mission did good service to the beleaguered city, it prevented him from continuing the valuable work that has hitherto supplied us with the graphic details of what he had seen with his own eyes. Accordingly we have scanty information as to the doings of Antonina, the wife of Belisarius, who now quitted Naples in order to rejoin her husband in Rome. It appears that one of her plans was to forward the intrigues of the Empress Theodora, who was bent on having Pope Silverius deposed and Vigilius elected in his stead. The latter had long aspired to the Papal crown, and woven many fruitless plots to that end. At Constantinople, however, he had gained Theodora's goodwill by leading her to hope that he would favour Monophysitism. Therefore, on arriving in Rome with a missive from the Empress, he was warmly received by Antonina, who did her utmost to forward his designs. Consequently Belisarius accused the Pope of intending to betray the city to the Goths, whereupon Silverius was deposed. He was succeeded by Vigilius (537), who pursued as before an ambiguous and changeable course, and began by neglecting to fulfil his promises to the Empress. The arbitrary deposition of Silverius, who died in exile on the island of Palmarola, near Pontus (June 21, 538), and the no less arbitrary election of Vigilius sowed the first seed of discord between

Belisarius and the Roman Church that afterwards served to undermine the Byzantine rule in Italy.

Meanwhile fresh reinforcements were arriving. Three hundred horsemen had already entered Rome ; 3,000 Isaurians had received orders to proceed from Naples to Ostia ; and 2,300 men, led by Joannes and other commanders, were escorting a convoy of provision waggons to the city. Belisarius then made various successful sorties from the Pincian and Flaminian Gates in order to cover the passage of troops and stores. The Goths, being wearied out by their prolonged and fruitless struggle, now offered terms of peace. So they addressed Belisarius as follows : " Let us make an end of this war, which is beneficial to none and injurious to all. Why should you fight against us, seeing that we came to Italy not of our own will, but by order of the Emperor Zeno ? He it was who sent Theodoric, our chief, to vanquish the tyrant Odovacar, and take lawful possession of the land in his name. We respected the laws, institutions, and religion of Rome. Theodoric and his successors made no new laws. We left all civil offices in the hands of the Romans, who had even the Consulship. Therefore, if we have observed all the terms and commands of the Emperor who sent us here, why do you make war upon us ? " So they requested that the Byzantines should withdraw from Italy, adding that they were free to carry off all the plunder they had seized down to that date. But Belisarius replied that Theodoric had been sent to chastise Odovacar and restore the Imperial authority, but not to make himself the king of Italy. What advantage could it be to the Emperor to replace one tyrant by another ? We will never surrender a country that belongs to the Empire.

The Goths offered next to relinquish Sicily, Naples,

and Campania, and likewise pay an annual tribute to the Emperor; but all in vain. Finally they proposed a three months' truce in order to have time to negotiate terms with Constantinople. To this Belisarius promptly agreed, and profited by the armistice to re-provision the city, bring in fresh troops, strengthen the walls, and carry on all the operations he chose. And although these were neither legal nor justifiable operations in time of truce, Witigis remained silent. But he made loud though useless protest, when, on withdrawing his garrisons from Portus, Albano, and Civitavecchia, he found that Belisarius immediately occupied those places. The latter also despatched his trusted Captain Joannes to the Abruzzi with a force of 2,000 men, and orders to remain quietly in the mountains during the truce; but the moment it should be broken, he was to pounce upon all the Goths in the Picenian region, carry them off into bondage, sack and confiscate their property, and share the spoil with his soldiers. In fact, when the Goths, tired of passively watching the unjust advantage Belisarius was taking of the truce, attempted to enter Rome by surprise, not only were they repulsed, but Joannes was ordered to pillage the territory of Picenum. After ravaging the land there, the captain advanced against Rimini and captured it easily, the garrison having been withdrawn to Ravenna. He then marched towards the latter city, since by taking that route on his return he could threaten the rear of the Goths investing Rome. Now, however, the latter were thoroughly dismayed, and at the end of the three months' truce they raised the siege, on the 12th of March, 538, exactly 374 days from the date of its commencement, and, having burnt all their camps, began to retreat. Owing to the scantiness of his cavalry, Belisarius was unable to pursue them and engage a decisive battle; but

he attacked them while they were crossing the Tiber, and caused such panic in their ranks that numbers were drowned in the river.

Notwithstanding his many successes, there is one question that naturally occurs to us : Why Belisarius, who, in a three months' campaign, had almost exterminated the Vandals, should have failed to overcome the Goths, who after a three years' struggle were still in open resistance? He had reached Rome, but there his advance was checked, and he only entered Ravenna two years later. This seems all the more extraordinary when one remembers that the inhabitants were all on his side, and that deserters from the Goths were continually flocking to his standard. The truth was that Belisarius had landed in Italy with a very small army, which by the time it reached Rome was reduced to a minimum by the necessity of leaving garrisons in Sicily and the southern cities of the mainland. Therefore he had to face a formidable Gothic host with a very inadequate force. Later on, it is true, various contingents came to his aid from Constantinople ; but by that time Court intrigues had perverted Justinian's judgment to such an extent that he invested the new captains he despatched to Italy with almost equal authority to that of Belisarius—a measure that disastrously retarded the course of a war that was wasting the country and oppressing its inhabitants with taxes. In fact the general discontent was continually swelling, and was additionally exasperated by the present attitude of Belisarius towards the head of the Roman Church.

Meanwhile warfare was still going on along the Flaminian Way leading from Rome to Fano and Rimini. The cities to the left of this route—Orvieto, Chiusi, Todi, and Urbino—all situated more or less in the hills, were held by the Goths ; but those to the right, Osimo excepted, were occupied by the Byzantines. Nevertheless

the latter could make no advance until they could capture the towns in the enemies' hands without exposing their rear to attack. Accordingly Belisarius, fearing lest Joannes' force of only 2,000 men might get into difficulties between Rimini and Ravenna, sent another thousand to his aid, with orders first to detach a small force to garrison Rimini, and then march back with the main body to join his army. Joannes' expedition had apparently succeeded, since the new contingent was able to advance unmolested. However, on reaching the Furlo Pass, otherwise called Pietra Pertusa, where the road is tunnelled through the rocks and forms a natural mountain fortress, they had a skirmish with the Goths, who, on being worsted, promptly made submission to the Byzantines, and followed in their ranks. But when the troops entered Rimini Joannes refused to obey the instructions they brought from Rome, so they were obliged to go back without him, whereat Belisarius was greatly enraged.

Meanwhile fresh contingents had landed at the seaport of Picenum (Ancona), led by Narses, whom the Emperor had furnished with full powers as commander-in-chief, not only to co-operate with Belisarius, but, in consequence of the jealousy the latter seemed to have excited at Court, likewise to hamper his movements. Narses, the new leader, born in 478, was already sixty years of age, was a very clever and most ambitious man, and had climbed, step by step, to the highest civil offices of the State. But, strange as it may seem, this man, sent by the Emperor to Italy with the rank of a general, had never before served in the army! For even when he had so efficaciously aided Belisarius to quell the revolt at the Hippodrome, he had only accomplished the task by bribing the leaders of both factions. Therefore, to give the command of an army to a civilian of this kind was



totally without precedent. Nevertheless, as Narses soon proved to be one of the first captains of the age his nomination did the greatest honour to the penetrating and indeed almost prophetic knowledge of mankind that Justinian had already shown on other occasions as well. Only, from the moment Narses appeared in Italy, being aware that he possessed the full confidence of the Court, and knowing the rising jealousy with which Belisarius was regarded there, he not only adopted a tone of perfect equality with that general, but likewise behaved to him with unconcealed arrogance. This was speedily seen at the council of war held at Fermo in the course of the year (538). Joannes had sent messengers from Rimini urgently demanding relief, for although he had repulsed the first attacks of the Goths, the town was now strictly besieged by the whole of King Witigis' army, and he was reduced to the terrible straits which Belisarius had foreseen. Accordingly, the question discussed was whether to go to his aid, advancing upon Rimini by the Flaminian Way, and leaving Osimo and other fortified cities in the hands of the Goths, or to abandon him to his fate, as a merited punishment for the disobedience that had so gravely compromised the final result of the war. Belisarius was in favour of the latter course, but Narses strenuously opposed it. The capture of Osimo, he declared, might be deferred for a time; meanwhile it was necessary to prevent the recently defeated Goths from recovering self-confidence by the seizure of Rimini and inflicting sore defeat and humiliation upon a Roman general and his troops. As to punishing Joannes for his disobedience, that, too, might be done later, without risking the honour and fortunes of the Empire by leaving Rimini unrelieved.

As these arguments carried a certain weight, Belisarius was obliged to yield, although greatly against his will.

Accordingly he sent a detachment of 1,000 men to keep watch over the garrison of Osimo, that comprised 4,000 Goths. Then, despatching troops to Rimini both by sea and by land, he advanced with horses, at the head of a flying column, in order to strike a decisive blow at the right moment. The main army meanwhile, in scattered formation, marched across country by various routes, taking care to light numerous fires wherever they encamped for the night, to give the enemy an exaggerated idea of their strength. In fact, when the Goths saw the Imperial galleys entering the harbour of Rimini on the one side, while on the other the whole plain seemed an enormous camp, with all the blazing watch-fires of the scattered troops, they feared to be completely surrounded, and hastily retreated on Ravenna. The garrison of Rimini was too worn out to give pursuit; but the newly arrived Imperials pillaged their camps. Joannes, divining that his deliverance was owed to Narses, pointedly reserved all his gratitude for him, and gave no thanks to Belisarius. This gave birth to a discussion between the rival leaders, that, being fomented by the partisanship of other generals, finally brought the Empire to ruin.

This affair occurred at a most unfortunate moment. Witigis was in Ravenna with an army of 30,000 men; Osimo, Orvieto, Urbino, and many other cities of Central Italy were held by the Goths. The Franks to the north were threatening to come to their assistance, while the small Imperial garrison at Milan was isolated in the midst of a region entirely occupied by the foe. Yet this was the moment that Narses chose for openly asserting his hostility to the commander-in-chief. At a council of war Belisarius suggested that the army should be split into two strong divisions, one to occupy Milan and all Liguria, the other to reduce Orvieto and the Central Italian cities, and when these operations were effected, it would then be

time to give battle to Witigis with the whole strength of the army. But Narses contended, on the other hand, that the province of Æmilia should likewise be occupied and Ravenna attacked, urging this view with great persistence. When Belisarius, losing patience, remarked that he alone was commander-in-chief, and showed him the commission received from Justinian, Narses replied that by the terms of that letter he was instructed to do whatsoever should be for the good of the Empire, and therefore the Empire was the only point to be considered. The end of the matter was that the army lacked all unity of command. Accordingly Belisarius decided to seize Urbino and afterwards Orvieto (538), and Narses marched with Joannes into the Æmilian province. Thereupon Witigis ordered his nephew to lay siege to Milan, while Theudibert, King of the Franks, sanctioned the descent into Italy of 10,000 of his Burgundian subjects, who, with the pretext of going to aid the Goths, had, so far, done nothing but ravage the land. The small garrison of Milan being reduced to extremity implored help from Belisarius, who despatched a force to their assistance; but the surrounding country being occupied by Goths and Burgundians, these troops never reached the beleaguered city. And when Narses, finally yielding to the general prayer, forwarded the necessary reinforcements, it was too late to save Milan. The little garrison had been forced to capitulate, and although the victors had kept their promise of sparing the soldiers' lives, they put no less than 300,000 citizens to the sword—if Procopius may be believed. The women were given in bondage to the Burgundians, in return for the assistance rendered in besieging the town, which was now razed to the ground. Thus, all Liguria was in the hands of the Goths. Nevertheless Belisarius reaped some advantage from this disaster, for in reporting it to Constantinople, he was able to prove that it had been an

unavoidable result of the divided command, and thus Justinian was at last persuaded to restore him to his former supremacy over the army, and recalled Narses to the East (539).

This change was greatly needed, inasmuch as the difficulties of the war were constantly on the increase. Witigis had contrived to induce Persia to threaten Justinian, who was therefore inclined to bring the Italian campaign to a peaceful end ; but Belisarius overruled the Emperor's wish, being as usual full of confidence in his success. Meanwhile the general undertook the siege of Osimo, caused Fiesole to be invested by two of his captains, and also sent a small force to occupy Tortona, in Northern Italy. It was at this moment that the Franks poured down from the Alps under the command of King Theudibert and, according to Procopius, they numbered 100,000 men. Although professing to come as the allies of the Goths, on entering Pavia they sacked that town, slaughtered men, women, and children, and routed the Gothic soldiery, who retreated on Ravenna. They next attacked the Imperial troops, who, being taken by surprise, also retreated for the purpose of joining with Belisarius, who was still besieging the strong walls of Osimo. Fortunately the swarm of Franks was soon swept away ; for those invaders found no means of sustenance in the exhausted land, and being forced to drink the water of the river Pò, a plague of dysentery broke out among them, killing off great numbers, whereupon the rest fled back to their own country (539).

At this juncture Fiesole surrendered, so that the conquerors were able to join the besieging force before Osimo. When this town, although of great strategic importance and with an almost impregnable position, was driven by famine to open its gates, its valiant Goth defenders were so indignant at having received no help from Ravenna,

that they all deserted to the Imperialists under Belisarius. The general then began his march towards Ravenna, hoping to gain that city by peaceful means, seeing that it was impossible to take it by force unless he were provided with a fleet. But there was no chance of obtaining ships just then, for the Emperor, being terrified by Persia's threatening attitude and the powerful assistance promised to Witigis by the Franks, was bent on making peace in Italy. In fact the Franks had undertaken to bring a host of 500,000 men to aid the Goths, provided Witigis would give them half of his North Italian kingdom. But the latter preferred to share Italy with the Byzantines, rather than with such powerful, treacherous, and cruel barbarians as the Franks. Being skilled in diplomacy as well as in war, Belisarius carefully fomented the natural distrust of the Gothic sovereign by reminding him of the recent ravages the Franks had perpetrated in Italy while pretending to come to his help. Meanwhile he pressed the siege of Ravenna with increased vigour, and Goth deserters came flocking to his standard from all sides. Then, too, when food was growing scarce in the town, the warehouses containing the last stock of wheat were burnt down. Some said the fire was caused by a thunderbolt, but others attributed the destruction to the wife of King Witigis, who wickedly betrayed her husband at this critical moment (540).

Therefore, Belisarius turned a deaf ear to Justinian's proposal of making terms with Witigis, and gave out that no peace could be arranged until Ravenna had surrendered. Accordingly, the Goths being already reduced to extremities by famine, naturally believed that the Emperor had sought to delude them by false suggestions of making peace, and, after holding a council, sent ambassadors to Belisarius bearing a strange proposal to the effect that they were ready to recognise him as the Emperor of the



West and swear fealty to him as their leader and lord. Belisarius, however, had no intention of betraying the flag for which he had always fought, so he gained time by spinning out the negotiations, knowing that hunger would soon force the Goths to yield without terms. Before long, in fact, the gates were opened to him on the sole condition of respecting the lives and property of the inhabitants, while, as to the question of becoming Emperor, that could be discussed later with Witigis. So, in the spring of 540, Belisarius entered Ravenna at the head of his army. The Goths, who had yielded their city without giving battle, and even proposed to renounce their individuality as a nation, now looked on with deep humiliation as the Byzantine army, much inferior in number to their own, swept in triumph through the streets of their city. But the women of Ravenna were trembling with rage, for they had been always told that the Byzantines were in overwhelming numbers and of great physical strength, while they now beheld a poor array of swarthy, undersized men, of very mean aspect compared with that of the tall, robust, fair-skinned barbarians. This made them so furious, says Procopius, that they spat in their husbands' faces, and cursed them for cowards.

According to his usual custom, Belisarius faithfully adhered to the terms he had sworn. By threats of condign punishment he forced his soldiery to respect the lives and property of the citizens. But he seized the royal treasure and kept Witigis and his nobles in custody, while all the rest of the Goths were set at liberty and allowed to go anywhere they chose. Ravenna now belonged to the Byzantines, who retained it down to 752, when it was taken from them by the Longobards, who soon after forfeited it to the Franks. Treviso, Cesena, and other cities also yielded soon to the Byzantines; but Verona and Pavia held out, and in the latter city the

Goths offered the crown to Uraias, a valiant leader and a nephew of King Witigis. But he refused the honour from unwillingness to usurp the throne of his captive uncle, and advised the warriors to offer it to Hildibad, who was then defending Verona, and was related to the King of the Visigoths. Hildibad promised to assume the crown, but only on condition that first another effort should be made to induce Belisarius to become Emperor of the West, and declared his own readiness to swear allegiance to him. But the attempt proved fruitless; for Belisarius was already preparing to sail for Constantinople, where his presence was urgently demanded, and where in due course he appeared bearing the treasures of the Goths and accompanied by Witigis and his lords, who, being his prisoners, were bound to grace his triumph.

With the conquest of Ravenna and the general's triumphal procession at Constantinople, the first period of the Byzantine war in Italy is brought to a close. Now was the time when Belisarius should have received signal honours and rewards, but, on the contrary, he was speedily involved in the troubles and adversities which were to poison the remainder of his life. Notwithstanding the many elements of strength still surviving in the Byzantine world, it was so corrupted by envy, malice, and greed, that all real and assured progress had ceased to be possible. We shall shortly see what a flood of ingratitude and bitterness was poured upon the man who had so nobly proved his loyalty to the Empire and its sovereign, by the splendid successes he had achieved in Persia, Africa, and Italy, and who, in spite of the black ingratitude with which he had been requited, was again to render them fresh service.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DESOLATE STATE OF ITALY—FOUNDATION OF THE ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT

THE still unfinished war in Italy had already lasted five years and had ravaged and exhausted the country to a positively unimaginable degree—in fact, to such sore extremity that there was no possible hope of its revival for a very long time. Procopius describes the state of things produced there by death, drought, and famine during the year 538, and more particularly in Tuscany, Liguria, and the Æmilian province. For two years, he says, the land had been left totally uncultivated, and even the poor crops of sickly grain which sprouted spontaneously were often left to rot on the ground. The inhabitants of Tuscany had fled to the mountains where they lived upon acorns ; the dwellers in Æmilia migrated into the Picenian territory, hoping to find sustenance on the Adriatic coast. But so great a dearth reigned there that 50,000 peasants were said to have suffered death from starvation. The same writer describes from his own experience as an eye-witness the manner in which they died. Their skin turned yellow, he says, from the overflow of bile, and adhered to their bones like leather, their flesh being all wasted away. Then the yellow tint changed to deep red, later to black, their eyes glared like those of madmen, and thus these poor sufferers

died. Even crows and other birds of prey left their shrivelled carcasses untouched. Also if the starving wretches chanced to find any food, they devoured it so greedily and in such great quantities, that it killed them, their digestive organs being already destroyed by exhaustion. Things arrived at such a point that men sometimes became cannibals. Procopius mentions the case of two women who, being left alone near Rimini, gave shelter to travellers and killed them in their sleep in order to devour their bodies. He declares that they had already disposed of seventeen victims in this manner, but the eighteenth escaped, and killed both the women instead. One saw poor wretches crawling about in the fields feeding on grass like goats, and often being too weak to uproot it, they perished of exhaustion, and were left unburied on the ground. Amid many instances of suffering and ferocity the same writer tells us a very piteous tale. When crossing the Apennines, on the way to Rimini, he saw a deserted infant lovingly fostered by a goat, who attended to its wants whenever it cried, and allowed no one to approach it, so that the child refused to take milk from some women of a neighbouring village. It seems that the mother, in flying for her life from Joannes' soldiery, had been separated from her child and could not find him again. Perhaps she had been killed or taken captive, but at any rate was heard of no more.

All the confusion, despair, and appalling misery caused by this war from the very first, grew worse and worse as it went on. In the midst of such sore and prolonged calamity it was no wonder that men's minds turned towards God, and that a new state of things, started some time before, should suddenly develop at an extraordinary rate.

For monasticism now spread so rapidly throughout the Western Empire that it seemed to be almost an epidemic. St. Benedict had so thoroughly reformed the whole system

that he was regarded as the founder of a new one. He was a really extraordinary and spiritually-minded man, in whom genuine goodness was combined with a profound knowledge of human nature and of the tendencies of his age. He accomplished the transformation of monasticism by establishing in the Western monasteries an easier and more human form of the religious life which by the anchorites of the Thebais had been practised with an exaggerated austerity sometimes pushed to the verge of insanity, and too decidedly antagonistic to the temper of Italians to gain ground among them. St. Benedict's leading merits are clearly shown in the monastic Rule he drew up for his Order. For seven centuries, namely down to the times of St. Francis and St. Dominic, the monks of the Western world were almost exclusively Benedictines, and were spread over Europe from Poland to Portugal, from Great Britain to Calabria, all subject to the Head of the Order established at Monte Cassino, a cloister that was, as it were, the new Rome, new Jerusalem, and Mecca of all Christian believers. The life of St. Benedict and his disciples has been abundantly illustrated in Italian poetry, painting, and legend. The conventual buildings, the paintings, frescoes, and poems inspired by these gentle brethren at a time when the world was torn by fierce passions and bloody wars, still transmit to us of the present day the spirit of peace, faith, and charity, of serene and constant labour that, throughout the Middle Ages, rendered the Order a perennial fount of art, poetry, and civilisation.

The new Rule of St. Benedict, comprising seventy-three articles, was undoubtedly suited to the needs of the time, and while strictly maintaining discipline, avoided all excessive severity. The possessions of those who took the vows, and all that was afterwards bequeathed to them by their families, became the absolute property of the



community, in which all individual rights were merged. Idleness was forbidden as being hurtful to the soul (*otiositas inimica est animi*). So the Benedictines took an active share in agricultural work and in all the domestic labour of daily life. One remarkable and very practical clause of the Rule insists that no one should be allowed to become a monk without testing the reality of his vocation for the monastic life by a term of novitiate. St. Benedict recognised no distinction between rich and poor, peasants, slaves, Romans, Byzantines, or barbarians. According to his Rule all men were equal as in God's sight; and this serves to explain the extraordinary rapidity with which it spread through the world.

The life of this greatest of monks has been related to us by Gregory I., perhaps the greatest of the Popes, and who, according to some writers, came into the world on the day St. Benedict died (March 21, 543). Although his narrative is full of miraculous legends, it enables us to comprehend the true character of the saint. Benedict was born (480) in the Sabine Hills, at Norcia, twenty miles from Spoleto, and 2,000 feet above the sea. He came of a noble Roman stock, began his studies in Rome about four years after Odovacar had become lord of Italy. But he soon renounced the world, and withdrew to the mountains near the source of the Arno to lead a solitary and contemplative life. But his foster-mother, who had accompanied him to Rome, followed him even to this desert place, being subjugated by the lofty moral influence he exercised over all men. Before long the fame of his sanctity and of the miracles he had performed attracted such a throng of enthusiastic followers that in order to escape them he fled to Subiaco, where a few anchorites were the only inhabitants. Here he received the monastic robe from a friar named Romanus, and took up his abode in a cavern, where at fixed times the friendly

monk managed to supply him with food from the convent by letting down a rope from the summit of the rock to the mouth of the cave. But Romanus suddenly disappeared and was heard of no more. Then, first of all, a hermit came from a long distance to bring food to Benedict, and afterwards certain shepherds were miraculously inspired by the Lord to minister to his needs. Later on came a time of trial, for the saint, being a young man in the full vigour of life, was assailed by temptations of the flesh, and in order to conquer them threw himself stark-naked into a thicket of thorn-bushes and prickly plants, which lacerated his rebellious body. But the blood that ran from his wounds caused roses to grow on those thorns, so that seven centuries later St. Francis found them still blooming, and the traveller may see their flowers to this day.

Meanwhile the fame of the youthful saint was so widely spread that the brethren of Vicovaro, having just lost their abbot, prayed him to assume that dignity. But after overcoming his reluctance and inducing him to fill the offered post, they were speedily disgusted by the severe discipline he imposed, and conspired to get rid of him by poison. After a miraculous escape from this new danger, he indignantly withdrew to his former solitude. But such crowds were attracted by the fame of his virtues that between the years 500 and 520 twelve monasteries were established in the neighbourhood of Subiaco, with superiors selected by himself. He however remained secluded with a few disciples in a humble refuge near Subiaco (called the *Sacro Speco*) on the mountain above his old cave. In spite of his avoidance of publicity, the number of his adherents and the jealousy of the regular clergy left him no peace. A certain ecclesiastic actually sent women of evil life to tempt him to sin, whereat St. Benedict was so disgusted that he fled to Monte Cassino. Finding a

heathen altar there, with a statue of Apollo, he promptly ordered them to be demolished, and founding the chief convent of his Order on the same spot, abode there for fourteen years (529-543). Totila, king of the Goths, came thither to see him in 545, and cast himself at his feet, and the saint, after reproaching him for the evils he had brought upon Italy, warned him that he would die before long. In the year after this memorable interview St. Benedict's own life came to an end. Shortly before he had lost his sister Scholastica, who had followed him to Subiaco and Monte Cassino, and also adopted the religious life, dwelling in a cell at a short distance from the monastery. He paid her a visit once a year, and left directions that he was to be buried near her grave on the site of the former shrine of Apollo.

One great proof, as we have seen, that St. Benedict's life-work was the creation of a man of genius and met a genuine need of the day consists in the enormous diffusion it so rapidly achieved. Another is the very remarkable fact that almost at the same time, but quite independently of him, the veteran statesman Cassiodorus, who had been absorbed all his life in political affairs, instituted a Rule resembling that of the Saint, in his own native place. During Witigis's reign, when Goths and Imperials had long come into violent conflict, he had been forced to recognise that Theodoric's great idea of welding Italians and Goths into one nation—an idea that he also had strenuously promoted for many years—was a dream that could never be realised. Therefore having now passed his sixtieth year, collected all his epistles and completed his Treatise on the Soul, he retired to his native province and founded two convents near Squillace. One of these was a mere hermitage on the hill above the town, for any one in need of absolute solitude; but the other, a real and fittingly arranged monastery, was established a

little further off at Vivarium, on the banks of the river Pellena (539). Even as St. Benedict, when founding his monasteries, insisted on adding manual labour to the contemplative life, so Cassiodorus combined mental labour with contemplation, and furnished a personal example of this double life. In fact many of his works were written in the cloister of Vivarium, and among them his commentary on the "Psalms," on the "Epistles of the Apostles," his "Tripartite History" ("Historia Tripartita"), a compendium of three histories of the Church, which he had caused to be translated from the Greek by Epiphanius. He also composed certain rules of goodly life, and a book entitled, "De Orthographia," containing precepts for the art of literary composition. Undoubtedly Cassiodorus was rather a man of letters and rhetorician than a saint, not precisely qualified to be a real founder of religious institutions. Nevertheless, his idea of introducing intellectual labour into the monastic life was—like the manual labour imposed by St. Benedict—so admirably suited to the needs of the period, that it was also adopted by the Benedictines. Accordingly, the latter transcribed many precious works of antiquity, thus preserving them from otherwise inevitable destruction. Monte Cassino became, as it were, a beacon-fire of civilisation, and its rays being reflected in every convent of the same Order, a track of light pierced the dark gloom of the Middle Ages to mark the way towards a brighter future.





## CHAPTER VIII

TOTILA, KING OF THE GOTHS—BELISARIUS AGAIN  
COMES TO ITALY AND OCCUPIES ROME—HIS  
RETURN TO CONSTANTINOPLE AND HIS DEATH

IN the year 540, when Antioch was captured by the Persians, Belisarius entered Constantinople at the head of his 7,000 bodyguards, bearing the royal treasures of the Goths and accompanied by Witigis and the other prisoners. For the second time he brought a captive barbarian monarch to the capital of the East. He was now thirty-six years of age ; therefore, still in the prime of life, and also at the zenith of his glory and good fortune. But already precursory signs were becoming visible of the disasters which were about to destroy his happiness, poison his existence, and sap his manly strength. No official triumph was accorded him, as on his return from the African war, although the people welcomed him with the enthusiasm due to so great a conqueror. The first misfortune to assail him was the suspected infidelity of his wife, which cruelly embittered his days. Having to go off to the Persian war, harassed by this atrocious fear and persecuted by Theodora, who had taken Antonina under her protection, he achieved little success in the field. On returning to Constantinople and discovering that there was no longer any room for doubt as to his wife's proceedings, he was obliged to decide on imprisoning the

guilty woman, although he still loved her. Worst of all, Antonina had most cleverly managed to win the favour of the Empress Theodora, by forwarding her intrigues and helping to persecute her enemies.

For some time past John of Cappadocia had become enormously powerful at Court. He was addicted to the most abominable vices and devoured by ambition, but he was a most successful tax-collector, often exacting money by means of such cruel tortures, that certain of his victims were said to have hung themselves as the only means of escape. Justinian protected him as a most useful instrument for augmenting the revenues of the State, while Theodora hated him on account of his domineering ambition. So Antonina, in order to curry more favour with the Empress, cunningly contrived to make the man divulge his schemes of self-advancement and his secret designs against the Emperor. Consequently John was sent into banishment, reduced to misery, forced to assume priestly robes, and go about begging his daily bread. The wretched close of this villain's career seems, in fact, as Hodgkin remarks, to have originated the legend that afterwards assigned a similar end to Belisarius. At all events, we know for certain that Theodora became increasingly attached to Antonina and hostile to the general, and after obliging him to release his guilty spouse and take her once more to his bosom, still continued to persecute him with insult and humiliation.

Meanwhile, ever since Belisarius had departed from Italy with all his best captains and his famous guards, the state of things in that country had grown worse and worse. There was no chief of sufficient authority to take the supreme command, no new civil government had been formed. The whole administration was either entrusted to the military leaders and troops scattered about the land



THEODORA AND HER LADIES  
(From the Mosaics at Ravenna.)



in various cities, or in the hands of the tax-gatherers. The revenue was rapidly decreasing, and there was no hope of obtaining funds from Constantinople, where every resource was being strained to provide for the expenses of the Persian war and maintain peace by dint of paying subsidies to the threatening barbarian tribes on the borders of the Empire. Accordingly, the most sordid and miserable economy had to be practised in Italy. Coins were clipped, the soldiers' pay was in arrear, their promotion deferred; public offices were put up to sale, the most necessary public works were neglected, even the aqueducts being left unrepaired. Therefore there was much disaffection among the soldiery; many deserted the ranks, while others tried to recoup themselves by preying on the people who had so largely contributed to the success of the Imperial arms. But, being now reduced to the last depth of misery, Italians began to regret the loss of their barbarian rulers, and thus the prospects of the Goths rapidly revived.

In fact, King Hildibad, who had remained in command of barely one thousand men, suddenly found himself at the head of a considerable army, and became master of nearly the whole of Northern Italy. But likewise among the Goths there was much disorder and little unity. Even in earlier days they had never been able to form a really united nation in Italy, and now, more than ever, seemed a horde of separate bands of adventurers, commanded by captains of discordant views. The lurking jealousy between the wife of Uraias, who had refused the Gothic crown, and the consort of Hildibad who had accepted it, grew so acute that their husbands were infected with the same passion. So Hildibad killed Uraias and was murdered in his turn in the spring of 541. A considerable number of Rugians had accompanied the Goths into Italy, but never entirely amalga-



mated with them, and now, on Hildibad's death, they proclaimed Eraric king by raising him on their shields, and the Goths accepted this Rugian chief. But he was incapable of doing anything, and only tried to negotiate with Constantinople for the purpose of erecting a little State of his own in Northern Italy between Frank and Byzantine territory, and placing himself at the Emperor's mercy. So his soldiers, on seeing all their hopes betrayed, murdered him after five months of his inglorious rule, but not before they had offered his crown to Baduila, the chieftain better known to history by the name of Totila. The latter being a kinsman of Hildibad would only accept the crown on condition that Eraric were first put to death.

Totila restored the fortunes of the Goths, ruling over them for eleven years, and always winning glory in the field. He was the grandest example of Ostrogoth valour, and not only gave constant proofs of his daring as a leader, but was also remarkable as a strategist and statesman. In fact, whereas the Byzantines sought to preserve their power in Italy by plundering and blackmailing the poorer classes, and thus favouring the great landowners who were their chief supporters—until alienated later on by perpetual taxation—Totila relied upon the people, the peasantry, and the small farmers, treating them all in the best possible way, and allowing even numbers of slaves to enter his army. "Throughout Italy," says Procopius, "Totila avoided doing injury to the peasants, merely enjoining them to cultivate the land in the ordinary manner, and pay the same tribute to him that they had formerly paid to the government and to the proprietors of the soil" (iii. 13). But he bore heavily on the great landowners, whom he sometimes expropriated; he seized their revenues, and even those of the Church, inasmuch as even in those days the Church possessed enormous

estates, and was therefore doubly odious to him, the Goths being all of the Arian creed.

The Imperial generals assembled in Ravenna had decided to advance with 12,000 men on Verona and Pavia; but after one successful engagement were compelled to withdraw towards Faenza. Totila, having already collected a force of 5,000 men, then took the offensive, crossed the Pò, and by skilled strategy succeeded in thoroughly defeating the enemy and driving them to take refuge within the city walls. He next made a bold march over the Apennines with the intention of taking possession of Southern Italy, where he hoped to find it easier to provision his army and obtain stores of corn from the neighbouring island of Sicily. He would be then in a position to threaten Rome, and compel the Imperials to divide their forces. Meanwhile, however, his first attempt to invest Florence with a portion of his army was frustrated by the Byzantine garrison, who, with the aid of a reinforcement from Ravenna, sallied from the gates and repulsed the besiegers. But soon afterwards they were defeated by the Goths, and thus Totila was able to pursue his advance upon Naples without molestation (542). At that time the only cities held by the Imperialists were Florence, Spoleto, Perugia, Rome, Ravenna, and Naples. It was very important for the Goths to capture the latter, not only because it was one of the principal cities of Southern Italy, and connected with Sicily, but also because it formed a good starting-point for operations against Rome. Accordingly Totila established his headquarters near Naples, at the same time sending off detachments into Apulia, the Basilicata, and the Calabrian provinces. The garrison of Naples only consisted of 1,000 infantry, but as Justinian appreciated the strategic value of the position, he now hastened to send several ships laden with men

and stores. But Totila was prepared to cope with any emergency, and profiting by a storm at sea that delayed the arrival of some of the vessels, he defeated the enemy and compelled the city to surrender (543). The members of the garrison were allowed to march out unhurt, and the life and property of the citizens were strictly respected, for King Totila maintained very rigid discipline in the Gothic army that he was about to lead to the siege of Rome.

All Italy, in fact, seemed on the point of falling into his power, for by this time only a few cities remained to the Byzantines, whose incapable, quarrelsome generals were already writing to Constantinople as though the Imperial cause in Italy were hopelessly lost.

Totila therefore felt sure of success, sent missives to the Senate and issued proclamations broadcast inviting the inhabitants of Rome and other parts to make common cause with him. So Justinian decided that Belisarius must be sent to resume the command in Italy (544). The general, however, was a sadly changed man after all the storm of troubles, of unjust persecution, and basest ingratitude by which he had been assailed. Crushed by all these sorrows, he had been forced to abase himself before the wife who had betrayed him, was even accused of stealing part of the Gothic treasure to cover his own lavish expenditure, and when sorely harassed with grief had been recalled from the Persian war because no great success had attended his arms. Besides all this he had been deprived of all his offices and emoluments, his body-guard disbanded, and his friends forbidden to approach him. So, being thus forsaken by all, the stricken man was often seen wandering alone through the streets of Constantinople, well knowing that at any moment he might fall by an assassin's knife. But now that the plague was devastating the land, that even the Emperor had been seized with it and barely escaped death; now

that the Imperial cause in Italy seemed on the verge of ruin, the government again appealed to Belisarius for help, grudgingly restored to him part of his property, and once more named him Commander-in-chief of the forces required for the Italian campaign. But he could not recover his long-dispersed bodyguard, and the government would neither give him a fresh army nor the funds required to collect one : he was expected to provide everything on his own account ; the war was to be made self-supporting. Yet, all this notwithstanding and oblivious of past wrongs, he set to work vigorously, and, collecting 4,000 Illyrians at his own expense in Thrace, immediately led them into Dalmatia, where he converted them into a trained and organised force. He succeeded in forwarding reinforcements and stores from this base to the blockaded town of Otranto just when the exhausted garrison was on the point of surrender, in order to secure a starting-point for the reconquest of Southern Italy. In fact, when the Goths discovered that a relieving force had contrived to slip through their lines they raised the siege and marched away to rejoin Totila's main army. Meanwhile the latter was already near Rome ; had taken Tivoli, slaughtered the inhabitants, and was now keeping watch over the Tiber to prevent supplies being conveyed up the river. Belisarius should have hastened to succour the city, and was most anxious to do so, but had neither men nor money for the attempt. Therefore he marched towards Ravenna instead, hoping that many disbanded veterans there would rally to his standard, but while successfully capturing Bologna on the way, failed to persuade old soldiers to return to the Imperial ranks. Next, the Illyrian volunteers he had brought with him, and who had received no pay, hurriedly deserted on learning that their own country was being devastated by the Huns. Meanwhile Totila had advanced

by the Flaminian Way, seizing several of the Byzantines' few remaining strongholds (545), including Spoleto, where the garrison not only surrendered to him, but joined his ranks. Thus he was enabled to cut the enemy's communications between Ravenna and Rome, and promptly laid siege to the latter city. Belisarius, although aware of the urgency of reversing the aspect of the war, and burning to make a determined attempt to relieve the ancient capital of the world, found it utterly impossible to move from Ravenna. He implored the Emperor to grant him men and money, and especially to have his bodyguard sent over to his aid, explaining the desperate state of things in Italy, where nothing could be squeezed from the disheartened and exhausted population. He then crossed over to Durazzo in Dalmatia with a small troop in order to meet the reinforcements which were finally on the road from Constantinople.

Twelve months had elapsed since he landed in Italy, yet so far he had won no real success. Rome was beleaguered by the Goths, who were absolute masters of the surrounding country, were levying taxes and gathering in the produce of the soil. The Imperial garrison within the city was very weak and badly provisioned. The citizens were already beginning to suffer cruelly from famine, and, what was still worse, the Imperial commandant Bessas and certain of his officers made a practice of supplying them with corn from the army stores at an exorbitant price, and so greatly to their own profit that they were in no hurry to arrange terms of surrender. Many of the inhabitants were so wasted by hunger that they could scarcely drag their emaciated limbs, and moved like spectres through the streets. So at last the commandant was obliged to order all non-combatants to leave the city, and many were slaughtered by the Goths as they feebly tried to escape across the Campagna.



No wonder, therefore, that Belisarius, in his natural impatience to march to Rome's relief, should have ordered a general advance the moment he received the long-expected aid from Constantinople. But fresh obstacles now arose from the lack of discipline that seemed to have become an epidemic in his army. Joannes, the leader of the newly arrived troops, had always been hostile to Belisarius, but, as he enjoyed great influence at Court in virtue of his marriage with a member of the Imperial family, it had been necessary to send him to Constantinople in order to obtain the needed succour. And now Joannes was bent on leading his force from Dalmatia to attack the Goths in Southern Italy, where they were known to be scattered and in little strength. These once disposed of, he said, it would be easier to win a victory under the walls of Rome, when he and Belisarius could simultaneously assault the enemy on both flanks, while the garrison could seize the same moment for effecting a vigorous sortie. But Belisarius, recognising the dangers of delay, wished to sail over at once to the mouth of the Tiber and make a direct advance up the river to relieve Rome, and directed Bessas to be on the alert to co-operate with him against the besiegers. But as it proved impossible to come to any agreement with Joannes the two generals finally adopted the worst of all plans, *i.e.*, of each acting on his own account. Accordingly Belisarius crossed the sea to Portus, while Joannes landed at Brindisi, entered that town after defeating the Goths, and then reduced the ancient Calabria (the district of Otranto), Apulia, and Lucania. Thence, instead of pushing on to join Belisarius, he advanced into Bruttium (the Calabria of to-day), and occupied Reggio, where, aided by the great landowners and their peasantry, he succeeded in routing the Gothic force. He thus commanded the Straits of Messina, and could inform the

Imperial government that he had reconquered Southern Italy. Evidently he had no intention of advancing to the North, in accordance with Belisarius's plan. Hence the small Gothic detachment which Totila had sent to the Campanian province was more than strong enough to keep watch on his movements.

Meanwhile Belisarius was occupying Portus with a scanty force and vainly protesting against being left unassisted. There was Ostia close to his hand, and still held by the Goths, yet he was unable to expel their small garrison owing to the weakness of his own force. Four miles off, at the Tiber's narrowest point, Totila had blocked the river with a chain and floating bridge defended by a wooden tower on either bank. Nevertheless, Belisarius was determined to relieve Rome, hoping not only to supply it with provisions, but to force his own way into the city, for the valiant leader was nowise disheartened by the numerous mischances and hindrances he had endured. He therefore despatched two sham deserters to measure the height of the towers ; then, having lashed two barges together and strengthened them with timbers, he erected a wooden tower on this foundation and raised to the top of it a small boat filled with a highly inflammable substance composed of sulphur, resin, and pitch, somewhat resembling the Greek fire of later times. Behind the two slowly moving barges came a small fleet of boats laden with corn and manned by soldiers, while other troops, both foot and horse, advanced along the banks escorting the men who were towing the barges.

Before starting Belisarius had left Isaac of Armenia as commandant at Portus, strictly charging him to guard that post at all risks and not to abandon it, even though he himself were seen to be in danger. He also gave Bessas notice of his advance and instructed him to sally

out to his support at the right moment so that the Goths might be attacked on both sides at once. Bessas, however, thinking only of his own profit, remained inert, so the Goths were able to march safely against Belisarius, who had victoriously overcome the first obstacles to his advance. For he had already broken through the chain and burnt one of the towers before the Goths came up, and immediately charging the foe drove them to flight with a loss of two hundred slain. The floating bridge was destroyed and the river-way seemed open to the corn ships, when, suddenly, fortune deserted Belisarius. For different reasons both Bessas and Isaac failed to obey their instructions, and thus ruined the whole enterprise at the very moment when Belisarius thought victory in his grasp. When news came to Portus that the Byzantines were victoriously pursuing their advance on Rome, Isaac could no longer restrain his ardour, and sallying forth with one hundred horse he crossed the *Insula Sacra* to Ostia and easily seized that town. Then, however, a strong force of Goths came up, who quickly routed the small body of horse, slew the greater part of them, and captured their commandant. An exaggerated version of this skirmish reached Belisarius like a bolt from the blue at the moment when his success seemed fully assured. Thereupon, for the first time in his life, he was really demoralised. Impressed with the idea that Portus had fallen into the enemy's hands, that his still beloved wife was taken captive, and that he would be attacked front and rear by the Goths, he hastily sounded the retreat. But on reaching Portus and discovering the real state of affairs he was so crushed with grief at having been thus robbed of his victory that he was prostrated with high fever and disabled for some time from continuing the campaign.

Totila, being victorious and feeling assured of further

success, then addressed these memorable words to his troops: "At the beginning of the war, 200,000 Goths were vanquished by 7,000 Byzantines; but now the 20,000 Byzantines scattered over Italy have been conquered by the feeble and despised remnants of the Goths. Things have happened in this wise, because in former times the Goths dealt unjustly with the Byzantines and were therefore chastised, whereas now that we have observed the rules of justice, God hath granted us victory in reward." Afterwards, on entering the Senate, he reproved the Romans for siding with the Imperialists who had stripped them of everything. "What evil," he cried, "was ever done ye by the Goths?" He then sent the Deacon Pelagius to Constantinople for the purpose of arranging a lasting peace, and wrote to Justinian in the following terms: "I respect thee, as a son should respect his father, and shall always remain thy trusty ally. But shouldst thou refuse to accept peace, I will destroy Rome, so that it may wreak no more harm on the Goths."

Justinian vouchsafed no reply to these threats, merely intimating that everything would be settled by Belisarius; that is to say, by the chances of war. Accordingly, all that could be done was to prepare for another campaign.

At this juncture Totila was obliged to repair to Southern Italy, where the Byzantines, being in considerable force, occupied many strong positions and made it increasingly difficult for him to obtain supplies for Rome. When preparing for his march to the South, he found it impossible to leave behind a sufficient garrison, so began to throw down the walls, with the intention of destroying the Eternal City outright. But while this truly barbarous work was in progress he received a letter from Belisarius that deeply impressed him. "Dost thou not know," wrote the general, "that to do injury to Rome is an outrage alike to her ancient glories and to posterity, an

act indeed of real profanation? Wouldst thou be remembered in history as the destroyer rather than as the saviour of the grandest and most magnificent city in the world?" According to Procopius, Totila was so affected by this remonstrance that he stopped the horrible work of demolition and started for the South, taking the senators as hostages in his train, and ordering the complete evacuation of Rome, which, as Procopius tells us, was emptied of its whole population for a time. Totila merely posted a small garrison on the Alban Hills, as though to watch from a distance the deserted city, whither he hoped to make a speedy return after defeating the Byzantines. This account may seem rather legendary, but it is a known fact that, on the one hand, Totila was unable to leave a sufficient force to hold Rome, and on the other, that the Eternal City still had so fascinating an effect on the barbarians as to make them regard it almost in the light of an inviolable sanctuary; hence its destruction must have seemed to all a crime against God and humanity. Also, it should be remembered that Totila had no wish to come to so decided a rupture with the Empire as to preclude all possibility of fresh negotiations.

However this may be, Rome was now deserted for six weeks, and left, it is said, without a single inhabitant. So Belisarius, after planting a small garrison at Portus, and routing the few Goths who marched against him from the Alban Hills, boldly entered Rome and began to rebuild the walls. Thereupon many of the fugitive citizens hurried in from the Campagna and vigorously aided the soldiers in repairing the ruined fortifications. But as no skilled workmen could be found to replace the demolished gates of the city, the open archways were closed up in great haste when it was learnt that Totila knew that Belisarius had occupied Rome and was speeding back to attack him. In fact the barbarian king made three



attempts to storm the walls, but, being always repulsed and pursued, withdrew to Tivoli. Then at last Belisarius contrived to set up new gates and sent the keys of Rome over to Constantinople. This occurred in 547, the twelfth year of the Byzantine war and the third of the second campaign.

The Goths were still very powerful in Italy. They were masters of Northern Italy, where their auxiliaries, the Franks, were still stationed ; they occupied Venice and had advanced into Central Italy which, the cities of Ravenna, Perugia, Ancona, Rome, and Spoleto excepted, was entirely in their power. But the Byzantines ruled in Southern Italy, although a considerable number of Goths was still scattered about the land, and held certain valuable strategic positions. Naturally, the possession of Rome and Ravenna was of great moral and material advantage to the Imperialists. But Belisarius's movements were paralysed by the permanent discord between himself and Joannes, and likewise by the want of reinforcements from the East. Thus for the space of two years the Byzantines did nothing but excite increased discontent among the people, to the advantage of the Goths who consequently regained various cities, and among them Rossano and Perugia. Accordingly Belisarius was thrown into such despair that his wife Antonina started off to Constantinople, hoping to be able to obtain the assistance he required through the mediation of her old patroness the Empress ; but on her arrival she found that Theodora had died on the 1st of July, 548. So, as a last resource, she prayed the Emperor to recall her husband. The request was granted, and in 549 Belisarius once more returned to Constantinople, loaded, as usual, with rich spoils of war, but with sadly diminished renown, seeing that he had achieved no important success throughout this second Italian campaign. Contrasted with the

brilliant achievements of the first period of the war, his failure seemed all the more evident. He remained at Constantinople, was always held in honour, but for ten years in succession was deprived of the chief command of the army.

However, in 559 the Huns invaded Moesia and Thrace, and not only perpetrated cruel massacres but even threatened the city of Constantinople. Thereupon Justinian, now in his seventy-seventh year, was so terror-struck that he proposed to fly from his capital, and once more appealed to his old but still glorious general. Belisarius was in his fifty-fifth year, and much shattered by the tribulations he had endured ; nevertheless he flew to arms without delay, and gathering a few of his old soldiers and a considerable force of peasant recruits, soon organised a small army ; and by fresh miracles of daring, resourcefulness, and good strategy succeeded in routing a greatly superior host who left 400 slain on the battlefield. Yet, the moment this victory had been won, Justinian was moved by a fit of childish, or rather senile jealousy, to recall him to the capital, again preferring to bribe the enemy to make terms instead of concluding an honourable peace that would have revived the former triumphs of the envied general. The people again welcomed Belisarius with the honours due to a conqueror ; but for the rest of his life he was excluded from public affairs and refused the command of the army. This emboldened his adversaries to accuse him of conspiring against the Emperor's person, so Justinian once more stripped him of all his possessions, and kept him under ignominious surveillance. But a few months later, either repenting or recognising his mistake, he restored all the general's emoluments (July, 563). In 565 the valiant Belisarius at last found rest in the grave, about nine months before the decease of the Emperor he had so faithfully served. The

legend of his having ended his life as a blind beggar sitting at a church door with an earthen plate in his hand and asking alms with the words *Date obolum Belisario*, only dates from the eleventh or twelfth century. It was unknown to his contemporaries, who scarcely alluded to the unhappiness of his last years. Most probably, as we had occasion to remark in a previous chapter, the close of the hero's life was confused with that of John of Cappadocia, who was really reduced to beggary though without loss of sight.

## CHAPTER IX

THE CONTROVERSY ON THE THREE CHAPTERS—  
NARSES' NEW EXPEDITION TO ITALY, DEFEAT OF  
TOTILA AND TEIA—FALL OF THE OSTROGOTH  
KINGDOM.

THE final withdrawal of Belisarius from public life marks the end, or indeed rather the collapse of Justinian's foreign policy. For now from every side the barbarians were again pressing forward. The Franks seemed the most daring and the most confident of success; while Totila's fortunes also appeared to be rapidly rising. Rome only possessed a garrison of 3,000 Imperial troops, who received next to no pay and were reduced to sore straits and seriously disaffected. They had already murdered their general, Conon, who apparently imitated Bessas in turning the public suffering to account by selling the stores of grain to fill his own purse. The present commandant of the garrison was a certain Diogenes, formerly belonging to Belisarius's bodyguard, who had successfully repulsed many of Totila's attacks. Nevertheless the latter, having contrived to seize Portus, was able to starve the city by cutting off supplies. So at last some Isaurian troopers, weary of suffering so much gratuitous hardship, betrayed Rome to the foe by opening the Porta San Paolo to them; thus the barbarian army poured in and put most of the garrison to the sword. Diogenes, however, escaped

with some of his men, while 400 more took refuge in Hadrian's Tomb (Castel St. Angelo), but being finally starved out, deserted to the barbarians (549) and were generously treated by Totila, who now feeling assured of success, wished to live on friendly terms with the Roman people. In fact, one by one, various cities, such as Rimini and Taranto for instance, surrendered to him, and even Civitavecchia and Ancona promised to open their gates unless the Imperialists soon came to their relief. Accordingly he decided to move to the South, seize the islands, and then, with his fleet commanding the sea, cut off the Imperial forces from all means of communication with the capital of the East. Crossing the straits, he landed in Sicily, and finding Messina prepared to resist marched into the interior of the island and easily occupied the rural districts.

At this juncture Justinian should have provided for the vigorous prosecution of the war, unless prepared to lose Italy altogether. Unfortunately, being already burdened with years, and more or less subject to fits of religious mania, he had become so deeply absorbed in theological studies as to neglect the most pressing necessities both of the war and the State. He aspired to be the champion of the true faith and restore the unity of the Church as well as that of the Empire. But, unluckily, the East and the West could never come to a complete agreement regarding the fundamental conception of religious supremacy. In questions of faith the Pope could recognise no authority as superior or even equal to his own, no matter what claims such authority might possess, nor what services it rendered to the Church. Justinian, on the other hand, considered his political authority to be derived neither from the people, the Senate nor the army, but directly from God; accordingly, while granting the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal



power, he maintained that both powers were combined or coexistent in the Empire. Therefore, even in religious matters, he desired to be at the head of the Church and supreme over the priesthood as well as over all believers "Our chief concern," he wrote, "is for the true heavenly faith, and the honesty of the clergy." Accordingly he condemned heretics, condemned heterodox doctrines; denied the conclusiveness of Synodic or Papal decrees, maintaining that the only valid decrees were those emanating from the Ecumenical Council convoked by himself and whose deliberations he had sanctioned and allowed to be published. Naturally, this view of the case could not be accepted by Rome.

Constantly absorbed in questions of this kind, Justinian had been strangely excited for some time by the discovery of certain errors, or rather flaws, in the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon, and being determined to have the honour of correcting them, often withdrew to his library to study the matter, or to start heated discussions with friars and priests. The question that chiefly occupied his mind is known to the world as that of the *Three Chapters*, or the three disputed points. It was a very obscure and very intricate question, and although of no great theological value, was of some political importance to himself. The Emperor desired as much as ever to be in complete harmony with Rome; but whenever terms to such effect were agreed upon they stirred discord in the East, where, as in Egypt, there were great numbers of ardent followers of the Monophysite creed, to which the Roman Church was so fiercely opposed. The new controversy turned on the doctrines of three Eastern bishops, in which plain signs of heresy had been discovered, although the Council of Chalcedon had failed to detect them. It would seem that Theodorus Ascida, the originator of the dispute, led the Emperor to hope that, inasmuch as the three bishops

concerned had sternly opposed the Monophysite doctrine, the fact of his condemning them would be an indirect means of conciliating his Monophysite subjects without angering the Church of Rome. No sooner was Justinian convinced, and not without reason, that the three bishops had really erred, he became almost crazy on the subject, anathematised the *Three Chapters* "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," and invited the Monophysites to adhere to the true doctrine as set forth by himself (544 and 551). But this time he was totally deceived. His decree won him no support from the Monophysites, and had the effect instead of rousing heated opposition in the West, where it was regarded as an offence not only against the authority of the Council of Chalcedon (451), but likewise against that of the Pope. Besides, seeing that the three prelates condemned by the Imperial decree had been not only revered in Chalcedon, but had been dead and buried a hundred years, why disturb their ashes after so long a time? The dispute was inopportune, to say the least, and of no practical import. Nevertheless Justinian gave his whole mind to it, and refused to withdraw a single step.

The person who suffered most was Pope Vigilius, who had gained his elevation to St. Peter's Chair by means of Theodora's intrigues, and being summoned over to Constantinople, found himself between two fires there. By condemning the *Three Chapters* he would stir a hornet's nest in the West; by failing to condemn them he would be in conflict with the Emperor. He finally yielded to the latter's will, and published a solemn condemnation of the *Three Chapters* in 548. But on beholding the storm this stirred against him in the West, and of which Justinian took no heed, he changed his mind, and openly opposed the Emperor. He not only refused to take part in the Ecumenical Council convoked at his own sug-

gestion, but protested against it (553). As might have expected, the Council issued an explicit condemnation of the *Three Chapters*, and consequently riots ensued, and the Pope, after being brutally treated and threatened with death, was banished to an island in the Sea of Marmora. Six months afterwards, worn out by all the calamities he had endured, burdened with years, and tormented with the stone, he finally capitulated, and on the 23rd of February, 554, anathematised the *Three Chapters*. Then he was permitted to return to Italy, but was only able to reach Sicily, and died there on the 7th of January, 555.

Nevertheless, the power of the Church and of the Papal authority was so great in that age that even during the above-described period of weakness, strife and violent oppression, it contrived to obtain from the Empire many new and notable concessions; for the year 554 witnessed the publication of the Pragmatic Sanction, which, by finally sanctioning the establishment of Justinian's Code in Italy, gave new and wider authority to the clergy, even in temporal affairs. Judges were to be elected by the bishops and leading citizens; weights and measures were to be regulated according to the orders of the bishops and Senate. All this, in addition to many other earlier concessions. In 546 it had been decreed that clerics could only be tried by ecclesiastical tribunals. In many cases appeal could be made to the bishop from the verdict of common courts of law; and thus the bishop became a species of popular tribune, and was likewise charged with the superintendence of the public granaries, public buildings, and aqueducts. Undoubtedly these privileges were granted to the bishops simply because they were officials in the pay of the Empire. But the Church accepted them without discussion, and, as the Imperial authority began to decline and the spiritual

independence of the Church could be more widely asserted, she began to display equal independence even in the exercise of the temporal powers which had been conferred upon her. For, without reflecting on the natural consequences of the act, the Empire had provided the Church with weapons to be turned against itself. Now the Pragmatic Sanction, which seals, as it were, all these numerous concessions, was issued by Justinian for the expressly stated purpose of following the advice of Pope Vigilius, whom he had so cruelly humiliated and ill-treated !

Certainly Justinian had reason to rejoice over his triumph with regard to the *Three Chapters*, inasmuch as he had contrived to make the Pope condemn them ; but he was still far from the goal he wished to reach, for he had not only failed to win over a single Monophysite to his side, but had alienated more deeply the affection of the Italian people. Besides, the religious strife he had provoked clearly proved to all that the Pope could have no freedom of action under Byzantine rule. In fact, Vigilius had endured six years' detention in Constantinople, where the Patriarch was his foe, and where the Emperor had done him violence and treated him as a dependent of his own.

It is certain that the conduct of Vigilius was far from honourable, and caused serious injury to the Church. Indeed, for about half a century after his time she was sunk in obscurity and decay, until Gregory the Great appeared to renew her prestige. But Justinian's course throughout the controversy was highly unwise, and contributed to hasten the end of the Byzantine power in Italy and the establishment of the Longobard rule. It is true that he was endeavouring to reconstitute the unity of the Empire, while the Popes, on the contrary, sought to establish the unity and universal authority of the

Catholic Church ; but neither design could be fully carried out, since, both in politics and religion, the East was destined to separate from the West.

For some time past the studious Justinian had been so deeply absorbed in theological subtleties that for their sake he would have abandoned even the war of Italian conquest which he had begun with so much ardour, but that had already lasted much longer than he expected, cost great bloodshed, and entailed terrible ruin on the miserable inhabitants of the land. But from all quarters he was earnestly pressed to carry out his purpose of restoring the supremacy of the Empire, and many Italians had come over to Constantinople with petitions to that effect. The principal difficulty to be solved at that juncture was where to find a general really fitted to assume the full command that was indispensable to the success of the war. As recent experience had shown, Belisarius was no longer equal to the task. Hence his choice fell on his nephew Germanus, who, as the husband of Theodoric's grand-daughter, the widow of Witigis, seemed adapted to attract some adherents, even from the ranks of the Goths. Besides having wealth of his own, he was privileged to draw on the Imperial treasury for the expenses of the war. Accordingly volunteers flocked to his standard from all parts, including a certain proportion of Goths. But just when Germanus had collected a considerable force and was ready to march, sudden death fell upon him. Consequently his army remained in winter quarters near Salona (550-551).

Meanwhile Totila was besieging Ancona, a port of great value to the Imperialists, especially in case they should decide to make a descent on Central Italy from Dalmatia. For this reason Joannes, the daring and imbitious general, who knew Italy well and was versed in fighting the Goths, resolved, in spite of contrary



orders, to cross over from Dalmatia and attempt to relieve the city by a naval attack. Therefore, in concert with Valerian, who was stationed at Ravenna, their joint fleets came in contact, off Sinigaglia, with the numerous warships of the Goths. But as usual the latter were incapable of withstanding the Byzantines by sea; their fleet was entirely destroyed, and the Imperial ships had free command of the Adriatic. The Goths then raised the siege of Ancona and withdrew to Osimo. Totila was induced to propose fresh terms of peace, offering to give up Dalmatia and Sicily, and likewise to pay tribute-money to the Empire and recognise its suzerainty. This would be the best means, he declared, of preventing the Franks from reaping the whole advantage of the war, seeing that they still held several important positions in North Italy. But the time for negotiations was passed, since Justinian had already nominated Narses to the post of Commander-in-chief (551).

This celebrated eunuch was a bent, undersized man, and about seventy-three years old. Up to the age of sixty he had been constantly employed in civil affairs, and had gained much renown by his administrative skill. He was a fervent Catholic, very shrewd, extremely ambitious, and was supposed to be under the direct protection of the Virgin, for whom he professed a special devotion. When Justinian, with marvellous insight, first raised him to the rank of a general, this clever civilian was already sixty years of age, and had never had an opportunity of showing the fine military gifts he was afterwards proved to possess, and which none—save the Emperor—could have divined. Being despatched to Italy, while Belisarius was in command there, he had been prevented from then displaying his worth by the fact that being speedily at odds with his Commander-in-chief, he had only compromised the result of the war. Never-

theless, he had acquired a singular ascendancy over his fellow-officers, as well as over the soldiery, and this naturally strengthened the high opinion of him that the Emperor had instinctively conceived. Accordingly he again despatched him to Italy as Commander-in-chief, to restore the fortunes of the war and of the Empire. As Narses not only possessed a large fortune, but knew how to extract money from the State, his first care was to collect a powerful army, since the force already organised in Dalmatia seemed altogether insufficient for his purpose. He therefore caused troops to be levied at Constantinople, in Thrace and in Illyria. He likewise gathered 2,500 Longobards, who brought 3,000 additional men-at-arms in their train, and were led by Audoin, whose son Alboin overran Italy with his tribe sixteen years later on. Narses also enrolled 3,000 Heruli, and had Gepidæ, Huns, and even Persians under his command. With this army he marched into Dalmatia to join the force already assembled there, in order to start for Italy as soon as the entire host was properly organised and drilled.

Although the Imperials were now in command of the Adriatic, they had no ships suited for the transport of a numerous army. Also grave anxiety was felt as to the risk of exposing vessels laden with men and munitions of war to possible storms or sudden attacks from the foe. So Narses decided on advancing by land, round the coast, with his provision-ships, as a naval escort, hugging the land and ready to serve in ferrying the troops across the wide streams of the Tagliamento, Isonzo, and Brenta. He followed a route that enabled him to avoid fortified places and towns occupied by the Franks. Verona, which was held by the Goths under the valiant Teia, was fortunately at a long distance from his line of march. So the Imperial army reached Ravenna unmolested, next pushed on to Rimini, and after defeating some of the

garrison who sallied out against them, and killing their leader, proceeded southwards by the Flaminian Way. But they quitted this road at the point where it turns away from the sea, and, running up into the hills, crosses the Apennine pass called the Furlo, or Pietra Pertusa. For this pass being, as has been said, a species of natural fortified tunnel, and held at the time by the Goths, would have been extremely difficult to force. Narses, therefore, avoided it by continuing his march along the shore, and then turning inland, regained the Flaminian Way, beyond the Furlo Pass. After crossing the mountains, he encamped on a wide plain, midway between Scheggia and Tadino, which stand about fifteen miles apart. On this plain his first important battle was fought.

Totila was stationed near Rome at the time, awaiting the arrival of Teia's army. On his being joined by the greater part of that force, the united armies advanced against the foe, although aware that the Imperialists greatly outnumbered them. After reconnoitring the ground, Narses posted fifty men on a slight eminence that he regarded as the best strategic point of the field. In fact, his handful of men held the hill throughout the day, and with an heroic valour worthy of ancient Romans, drove back the often repeated charges of the Gothic cavalry. The general also arranged that his barbarian contingent, in whom he had small confidence, should be placed in the centre of the army, dismounted, and made to fight on foot, to diminish the chance of panic or treachery driving them to flight. The Romans were stationed on either flank, and each of the two wings comprised 4,000 archers, who, contrary to the rule adopted by Belisarius, were also dismounted. The left wing was supported by 500 horse, ranged in extended order in the direction of the hill that, as we have seen, was considered to be the key of the position. Another body

of horse, 1,000 strong, was kept in reserve, ready to meet emergencies.

Narses' tactics were to await attack from the enemy, who, noting the weakness of his centre, would certainly make a most determined effort to pierce it, and push forward far enough to be easily trapped between his two wings.

The opening of the struggle was delayed for some time, because Totila was waiting for further reinforcements from Teia, but directly the expected 2,000 appeared the battle began. The Imperial archers did great execution on the Goths, while the Heruli and Longobards, after a moment of hesitation, attacked with so much vigour that the enemy took flight. Even the Gothic cavalry, regarded by Totila as the main strength of his army, finally fled the field at such headlong speed that many of his infantry were trampled to death by the horses' hoofs. He, too, being mortally wounded, was forced to retire, and expired in a hovel at Caprae (the modern Caprara), a village fifteen miles from the battlefield, between Gubbio and Tadino (552).

After this victory the barbarians in the Imperial service, and more particularly the undisciplined Longobards, committed every kind of excess, sacking and burning the peasants' houses, outraging women, and rousing such general disgust, that even the stern, unmerciful Narses saw the necessity of getting rid of the Longobards. Therefore, by a large grant of money, he induced the fierce throng to turn homewards over the Julian Alps, escorted by Valerian. The latter proposed to lay siege to Verona on his way back ; but his plan was opposed by the Franks, who occupied many places in the eastern part of the region beyond the river Pò, and preferred Goths to Imperialists, inasmuch as the former were much weaker and already hard pressed in Southern

Italy. Besides, as the Goths had given the Franks permission to occupy the position they now held in Italy, the latter may have judged it an act of good and loyal policy to favour the former's cause—so long, at least, as their own interests suggested no other course. Therefore Valerian, being unwilling to provoke a second war while the first was still unfinished, remained stationary, and merely sought to prevent the Goths, who were gathering in greater strength in Northern Italy, from marching towards Rome to their comrades' assistance, now that fresh warfare seemed certain in the South. After the defeat and death of Totila, they had flocked to Pavia, which became one of their principal centres, since Ravenna had been lost, and unanimously proclaimed the valiant Teia as their king. This new ruler immediately tried to secure the still doubtful friendship of the Franks, but could gain nothing save a promise of neutrality, and that only in return for the cession of the royal treasure-hoard at Pavia. It naturally suited the Franks to adopt the attitude of spectators and quietly wait until the rival powers were nearly exhausted, to then attack the victor on their own account.

Meanwhile the cities of Central Italy were rapidly succumbing to the Byzantines. Narni, Spoleto, Perugia, and even the garrison of Pietra Pertusa, all yielded in turn. Narses was already marching on Rome, where the Gothic garrison was massed near Hadrian's Mausoleum, which Totila had fortified. Their force was too small to attempt the defence of the city walls, but neither were the Imperialists strong enough to invest the whole circuit. Accordingly another series of partial assaults and partial repulses was carried on, until one of Narses' captains contrived to scale a neglected rampart, and opened the gates to his comrades. The Goths took to flight as the Imperialist host poured in, and the defenders of Hadrian's



Tomb soon surrendered. Once more the keys of Rome were despatched to Justinian—of Rome, the unconquerable, that, during this Emperor's reign, was five times captured, five times delivered!

This event was followed by a fresh period of slaughter. Many senators still held captive in Southern Italy were now put to death. Even Teia stained his glorious renown by ordering the murder of three hundred young Romans, ostensibly chosen to serve as his pages, but really held as hostages. The truth was that the Goths, being reduced to a scattered remnant, were wild with despair; accordingly their worst passions were now vented on wretched Italy, which seemed well-nigh extinct. Some of the Goths in Pavia flew to join with the Franks farther north; those in the South commanded by Aligern, brother of Totila, shut themselves up in Cumæ, where another portion of their State treasure was stored. So Narses quickly sent a detachment of his army to attempt the capture of this hoard, as well as of the town. Other detachments were marched into Tuscany to prevent Teia from advancing thence to join Aligern and other leaders in the south. But the valiant barbarian evaded his foes, crossed the Apennines, and pushed on to the south, where the Goths were again in great force. Accordingly, another pitched battle was required. Narses hastened forward to catch Teia before the latter could effect a junction with Aligern, and came up with him near Naples, at Nocera, on the Sarno. The Gothic king was entrenched there, with the heights of St. Angelo protecting his rear, and with his fleet at hand to provision his camp. But his fleet suddenly played him false by deserting to the Byzantines, whereupon he withdrew to another position under the cliffs of Monte Lettere (Lactarius), a ridge of the St. Angelo range. But scarcity of provisions made a long halt there impossible, and he therefore decided

to give battle. His troops charged the foe with such irresistible dash that the latter had no time to form in regular order, and was driven to fight in separate bands. Teia fought heroically at the head of his force. All the Imperialists made him their target, so that his great shield bristled with the numerous arrows fixed in it. From time to time these missiles made it so unbearably heavy that he was obliged to throw it to an attendant, and take a fresh buckler. But at last, while making this exchange, his body was uncovered for a moment, and he fell, mortally wounded in the chest. Thereupon his enemies cut off his head, fixed it on a spear, and carried it round the camp in view of both armies. The Goths continued the struggle for two days longer, but then surrendered on condition of being allowed to depart unharmed with all their portable property, and on promising to fight no more against the Empire. Accordingly many of them crossed the Alps, and became mixed with other tribes, while a considerable number remained scattered about Italy, hoping to be left unnoticed. Others who had refused the offered terms contrived to join the Franks, and did their best to urge the latter to make war on the Byzantines, who, having routed the Goths, would assuredly hasten, so they said, to vanquish the Franks, and drive them from the country. Finally certain of the Gothic captains elected to shut themselves up in fortified cities, and assume the defensive on their own account. This plan was adopted by the Gothic garrison of Crema, by the thousand men who took refuge in Pavia, and by different bands in other cities; but, sooner or later, all were compelled to yield to the Byzantines. The Gothic dominion in Italy was now broken up and received its deathblow when the hero Teia fell. After some feeble efforts to revive here and there, it disappears altogether from history.

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## CHAPTER X

DEATH OF JUSTINIAN AND DEATH OF BELISARIUS—  
THE EMPIRE IS PLUNGED IN FRESH DIFFICULTIES  
—NARSES IS RECALLED TO CONSTANTINOPLE BUT  
REFUSES TO OBEY THE SUMMONS.

AT this moment the Franks could have freely invaded Italy from Gaul; but their King, Theudebald, had no heart for daring enterprise. He merely gave permission to two Alamannic brothers, a pair of tribal chieftains under his suzerainty, to risk the passage of the Alps on their own account, with an army of 75,000 men. Were they victorious, Italy would be annexed to his kingdom; if defeated, he could deny all responsibility for their acts. The two brothers advanced in spirited fashion, counting, in any case, on winning much spoil and marching back again laden with booty. But they speedily discovered that Italy was so thoroughly devastated already, that although it were easy enough to complete its ruin, no shred of treasure remained to be plundered. On the contrary, the land was so utterly laid waste that no army could find means of support there without having supplies from abroad.

On the other hand, Narses had now to contend with the remnant of the Goths shut in the fortified towns, and also with the Franco-Alaman army, which was of considerable strength, and if favoured by fortune or by dragging on the war, might receive reinforcements from

Gaul. He therefore left a force to continue the blockade of Cumæ, where Aligern seemed determined to make an obstinate defence, and led his main army into Tuscany against the cities held by the Goths. All those towns readily surrendered, with the exception of Lucca, which stubbornly held out in the hope of being relieved by the Franco-Alamans, who were then boldly pursuing their advance. In fact, the Byzantines whom Narses had sent towards Parma, either to meet them in battle, or at least to check their progress, were worsted by them and obliged to retreat upon Faenza, leaving the road to Tuscany open to the Franks. This reverse naturally caused great alarm among the Imperial force besieging Lucca, since they feared to be caught between two fires, and simultaneously attacked by the Franks on one side and a sortie from the town on the other. Nevertheless Narses behaved with such admirable firmness, that he not only revived the courage of his troops, but induced the city to open its gates. Even Aligern, the defender of Cumæ, became convinced of the necessity of surrendering either to the Empire or to the Franco-Alamans, who, in true barbarian style, were sacking and destroying everything in their way; so he decided to go in person to Classis and have speech with Narses, who had now advanced to Ravenna. There the Goth not only made submission, but—although the brother of Totila—became a faithful soldier of the Empire, and from that time forth fought valiantly in its cause (553).

The Franco-Alamans alone were still unconquered and rapidly marching southwards, but a few hundred of Narses' troopers attacked and routed 2,000 of these barbarians in the neighbourhood of Ravenna. Then, noting that the invaders only ravaged the country as they streamed on and shirked giving battle, Narses withdrew to quarters near Rome.

The barbarian host had split in two after crossing the Apennines ; one half, under the command of Butilin (called Buccellino by the Italians), pushing on to Bruttium by Campania and Lucania ; while the other, under Leuthar, advanced through Apulia and ancient Calabria down to Otranto. But discord soon arose between the brothers. Butilin was resolved to continue the campaign ; Leuthar, on the contrary, wished to retire to his own land with all his prisoners and spoil. So he turned to the north, but being attacked by the Byzantines at Pesaro, all his prisoners made their escape and his booty was captured by the foe. Finally reaching Venetia, pestilence assailed his ranks, and he and the greater part of his force succumbed to the disease. Butilin's fate was little different. Advancing through an already wasted land, which Narses had caused to be ravaged afresh in order to prevent him from finding any means of sustenance, the barbarian chief was obliged to feed his army on grapes, whereupon all suffered so severely from dysentery that he was driven to retreat. On reaching the banks of the Volturno, near Capua, with 30,000 men, and learning that the Byzantines were advancing against him with only 18,000, he took up a strong position, with the river protecting his rear, and barricaded his camp with heavy waggons. His opponent, Narses, employed his usual plan of having very strong flanking columns and arranging that the centre should give way so as to entice the enemy to charge in wedge-like formation and easily trap it between his wings. Nevertheless it proved to be a long and fiercely contested fight, and we must not forget to note that the prowess of Aligern helped to decide the victory of the Imperial army. The Franco-Alamans were totally destroyed and their leader Butilin perished in the field (554). So that devastating horde having passed like a meteor, Narses marched back to Rome loaded with



spoil. Only one fortified place now remained in the hands of the foe. This was a town fifty miles from Naples, named Campsa by some authorities, Conza by others, garrisoned by 7,000 Goths. But they, too, surrendered at last; their lives were spared, and as they were sent over to Constantinople probably entered the Imperial service.

Thus the twenty years' Greco-Gothic war came to an end, after having reduced Italy to the last extremity of ruin. The Ostrogoth kingdom, which had endured for sixty-four years, was now finally shattered, and the Ostrogoths ceased to exist as a nation, and disappeared—like the Vandals—as completely as though they had been a mere horde of adventurers. Some of them, as we have seen, crossed the Alps and repaired to the East; while others stayed in Italy, either fighting independently or in junction with the Franks. It is certain that throughout the ensuing period of fourteen years, during which Narses retained the chief command in Italy, he had many serious encounters both with Franks and Goths, but unfortunately we have no authentic details of these fights. The destruction of the Alamannic brethren and their hosts naturally roused the wrath of the Franks, who were still occupying a few of the North Italian towns, and their anger increased when fugitive Goths came pouring into their camps, full of fury and rancour and thirsting for vengeance on the Byzantines. It is a recorded fact that, in 555, the Franks defeated a Roman army, but the latter afterwards avenged this reverse by driving the barbarians out of Italy (Muratori, "*Annali*," viii. 302). Paulus Diaconus alludes to another encounter of a later date, in which a Frankish general was slain, and a Gothic Count was taken and sent prisoner to Constantinople. Other fights are recorded to have taken place in 563 and 565, and always to the advantage of the Imperialists. In short,

it may be taken for granted that at the close of the Gothic war the Franks not only threatened to make war but actually started a fresh campaign, which might have assumed dangerous proportions had they not been harassed—as was frequently the case—by internal dissensions which for some time prevented them from crossing the Alps in force. Thus, although there were some serious skirmishes with the Franks already settled in Italy, these barbarians were finally compelled to leave the country and return to their native land.

Thereupon Narses, at the head of his army, formally assumed the government of the whole peninsula, with the title of Patrician and Master of the Soldiery. He never bore the title of Exarch (as erroneously stated by some writers), for that title only makes its official appearance in Italy at a later date. The Pragmatic Sanction recognised the validity of all edicts issued by the earlier Gothic kings, but excluded those of Totila and Teia, because those two sovereigns were held to be tyrants instead of kings, seeing that Constantinople had never recognised their election to the throne. Accordingly all their laws and regulations were annulled, especially those which were to the advantage of the people, peasantry and petty proprietors whom the Goths had sought to conciliate; while, on the other hand, all enactments of the Roman Courts—generally favourable to owners of large estates—were now put in force. Besides this, the Pragmatic Sanction maintained—at least in theory—the complete separation of the military and civil powers, so that Italy still possessed a Prætorian Prefect. Narses, however, was a general, had reconquered Italy at the head of his army, and continued to rule and defend the country by the same means. Therefore, in spite of opposing theories, both powers were concentrated in his person, so that he virtually resembled a military dictator. For the same reason, the Dukes

scattered over the provinces as his subordinates, together with the Tribunes subordinated to the Dukes, also combined both civil and military functions. This state of things produced uncertainty and disorder. Laws should have been carried out for the thorough reorganisation of the country, in order to give it some relief after all the cruel calamities it had endured for so long. But instead of this, it was necessary that Italy should furnish the means for the maintenance of a huge army, since Justinian had no money to send, and was more absorbed than ever in his theological studies. Hence there was a continued drain upon the already exhausted resources of the nation.

All this went on while the general discontent was already intensified by religious strife. On the death of Vigilius—the Pope who was so cruelly ill-used at Constantinople—the Emperor's old favourite, Pelagius, had been raised to the Papal throne. He wavered for a time regarding the question of the *Three Chapters*, but ended by condemning them, while feigning submission to the views of the Council of Chalcedon. This dubious conduct instantly evoked indignant protests from Italian bishops and clergy, especially in the north, where certain prelates positively charged Pelagius with having compassed the death of Vigilius in order to become his successor. The general resentment reached the hottest pitch when Narses, in pursuance of the Eastern theory of the Church being necessarily subordinate to the Empire, arrested several of the more turbulent bishops and sent them to Constantinople to be punished.

All public works were abandoned ; city walls, houses, churches, and aqueducts were allowed to fall into ruin although some of the Italian cities, Milan included, had been totally destroyed during the war. The roads were left unrepaired, rivers unbanked, so that the land was flooded and malarious fevers spread. Finally, a mortal plague

broke out that carried off its victims within three days, and wrought the greatest havoc in Northern Italy. There, says Paulus Diaconus, farms and houses lay deserted, and neglected flocks wandered through the fields. Ungathered grain rotted on the ground, grapes withered on already leafless vines. The moment any case of plague occurred every one fled from the cities. Sons left the bodies of their fathers unburied, and pitiless parents deserted their sick children. If any one tried to inter these victims, he caught the plague and was left unburied in his turn. It was impossible to calculate the number of the dead; no eyes were equal to the task: *visum oculorum superabant cadavera mortuorum* (ii. 4).

Such was the condition into which Justinian allowed the Empire to fall! It cannot be said that all the above-mentioned woes were direct results of his policy; but, more or less, they were certainly its indirect consequences. There is no doubt that he was guided by various ideas which, although sometimes unpractical, were always lofty, and had a great influence on the history of the world. But although, as we have frequently said, he had a marvellous faculty of discovering persons fitted to give effect to his ideas, his bad administration, ever lavish expenditure, and the heavy tributes customarily paid to barbarians, whenever it was inconvenient to quiet them by the sword, together with unceasing wars, had lamentably exhausted the strength of an Empire where agriculture had sadly declined, and neither trade nor industry flourished. All this, combined with the general corruption of the Imperial world and its Court, exercised a malignant influence from which Justinian could not always escape, and which incapacitated him from accomplishing any enduring political reform.

In an Empire composed of so many different countries, surrounded by so many foes, incapable of having any

true national feeling—owing to its corruption—and without any high standard of morality, there was always the danger that some fortunate and powerful general might successfully revolt and establish on his own account a separate and independent State ; or that some great Court official should conspire either to the hurt of his colleagues or against the Emperor himself, for the purpose of personal aggrandisement. Accordingly all were rivals at war with one another, and this or that grandee was always rising rapidly to power or being rapidly overthrown, just as Belisarius had been disgraced, in spite of his well-proved fidelity and the great and repeated services he had rendered to the Empire. Also, of late years, in addition to other causes of evil, Justinian had grown old and had sorely neglected the government of his Empire ; therefore it is easy to understand why public affairs should have reached so calamitous a point. Nevertheless, he had certainly achieved some great results, at least for the moment, though they could scarcely prove permanent. The Persians had been repulsed ; the Vandals and Ostrogoths destroyed ; Romanism had won a splendid victory over Germanism ; Africa and Italy were reconquered. This clearly showed that the Empire still contained great vitality—enough, in fact, to keep it alive for eight centuries longer—although continually surrounded by new perils. The Greco-Latin civilisation must have been truly prodigious, seeing that even during its decline it was able to gather and assimilate so many diverse elements, and produce, in the midst of the greatest disorder, an immense series of skilled administrators, of great and glorious generals capable of defending the State with brain and sword.

But on the death of Justinian it was soon seen that the dangers to which we have alluded were bound to become more formidable. On one side Persia, the Empire's



constant foe, was again threatening invasion ; on the other, the Germanic tribes were gaining fresh energy, chiefly owing to the rapid development of the Frankish power. At the same time the Slavonians were thronging towards the west, while the Finnish, Mongolian, and Tartar tribes, destined to work another great change in the world, were likewise advancing from Asia. It was highly necessary that Justinian should have been succeeded by a man of equal or greater capacity ; but, as we shall see, the new Emperor was precisely the reverse.

Italy was the part of the Empire that suffered most at this time. Shattered and exhausted by a lengthy war, without hope of assistance from any quarter, oppressed by Narses, whose unpaid soldiers were daily melting away, the country was deprived of means of defence exactly when the barbarians were regaining strength and threatening to advance. The overthrow of the Ostrogoth kingdom, which had stretched as far as Noricum and Pannonia, left Italy unprotected precisely on the border where barbarian tribes had always sought a passage and were soon to find one again.

This was the moment when Justinian was succeeded by his nephew Justin II., whose mother, Vigilantia, was a niece of Theodoric. The new Emperor quickly declared his intention of making considerable retrenchments, which naturally implied a radical change of policy. In fact, he renounced great wars and stopped the subsidies hitherto paid to the barbarians ; whereupon the latter once more rose in arms against the Empire, which had neither enough men nor funds for the defence of its borders. Narses suffered most under the new *régime*, since he was reduced to impotence at the moment when preparations should have been made for strengthening the threatened frontiers, and he could hope for no assistance from Italy. Indeed, a deputation of Roman nobles had just gone to

Constantinople to complain to the Emperor of the insupportable tyranny of his general Narses, who had reduced Italy to such a plight that any other government would be preferable to his. Therefore, the envoys added, unless some remedy were speedily applied, the Italians would be compelled to throw themselves into the arms of the barbarians, who would assuredly treat them more leniently. In truth, things were now at such a pass that, seeing the impossibility of inducing the aged Narses, who had always done as he chose, to change his methods, the government finally recalled him to the East in 567, and appointed a successor who was ordered off to Italy at once.

This affair gave birth to a legend which, although unrecorded by Byzantine writers, was widely circulated in Italy at the time, and is also told by Paulus Diaconus. According to this tale Narses refused to obey the order of recall, whereupon the Empress Sophia is supposed to have cried, "I know what to do with the old eunuch. He shall be confined to his proper place in the women's quarters, and forced to spin wool with the maids." On receiving this insulting message, Narses is said to have replied, "Then I shall spin such a coil for the Empress as she will never unravel so long as she lives." By way of carrying out this threat, Narses is then supposed to have revenged himself by summoning the Longobards into Italy and sending ambassadors laden with the finest fruit of the land, the better to tempt them to invade it. So the Longobards were persuaded to accept the invitation, and therefore poured down from the Alps in 568. Meanwhile Narses had retired to Naples, still in high wrath, and presently recognised what a blunder he had made. Accordingly, when Pope John III. succeeded to Pelagius in 561, the general besought the new Pontiff to undertake the defence of Italy, hastened back to Rome, and suddenly died there.

The legendary character of this tale is too plain to need demonstration. As we have previously observed, many of the Longobards had already visited Italy, and having fought there under Narses, needed no gifts of fruit to be assured of the fertility of the soil. Besides, if the supposed gifts were despatched to them from Naples, one may easily imagine in what condition they arrived. The Longobards were moved to cross the Alps by far stronger motives than the capricious spite of any one man, although it is by no means improbable that Narses' wrath may have paved the way for their invasion by allowing everything to go to ruin and making no preparations for defence.

## BOOK III

### *THE LONGOBARDS*

#### CHAPTER I

THE LONGOBARDS' WAR WITH THE GEPIDÆ—THEIR  
INVASION OF ITALY, AND CONQUESTS THERE—  
THE DEATH OF ALBOIN—ELECTION AND DEATH OF  
CLEPH—INTERREGNUM—THE DUKES—APPORTION-  
MENT OF THE LAND—THE POPE'S FIRST APPEAL  
TO THE FRANKS FOR HELP (580)

THE Langobards, or Longobards as they were afterwards called, whose name was owed, according to their historian, Paulus Diaconus, to the great length of their beards, are mentioned by Velleius Paterculus as being the fiercest of all the fierce German tribes. At that time they dwelt near the Elbe. Tacitus speaks of them at a later date, and praises their courage. They would seem to have shared in the great Barbarian advance to the south, and were repulsed by Marcus Aurelius during the Marcomannic war (178-79). For the three following centuries their name was unheard; but there is reason to believe that they were included among the tribes under the rule of the Huns during Attila's reign, but separated from

them when the Hunnish kingdom was broken up. But, in point of fact, we know very little regarding their origin. Paulus Diaconus gives a lengthy account of it, consisting of a string of legends, from which no genuine historic information can be gleaned. He maintains that the Longobards were of Scandinavian origin. But their native land becoming too narrow for their needs, one-third of the tribe migrated to the south, under the guidance of two brothers named Ibor and Aio, of the Gungingi or Guggingi house. Agilmund, son of Aio, became their first king, and was succeeded by six others of the same family, the last of the six being Tato, who fought and vanquished the Heruli, about the year 508. Two more kings succeeded to Tato. The second of these was Waltari, under whom Audoin became all-powerful and sent a contingent to Narses' aid during the latter's second Italian campaign. Audoin was the father of Alboin, with whom legend comes to an end and real history begins.

By that time the Longobards had invaded the land of the Rugi across the Danube; while Pannonia, on the other side, was inhabited by the Gepidæ, who had been long their bitterest foes. Their reciprocal enmity waxed fiercer when the Heruli, on being completely routed by the Longobards, united with the Gepidæ who, thus reinforced, profited by the war then raging between Totila and the Byzantines, to occupy other territories belonging to the Empire. Thereupon, Justinian, following the traditional policy of the East, stirred the Longobards against them, and in 554 the youthful Alboin first proved his valour by taking the field against them, and killed in single combat Thorismund, the son of Thorisind, their king. Another legend tells us that the latter chivalrously invited Alboin to a banquet, and then arrayed him in the armour of his slaughtered son. Nevertheless they nearly came to blows. Remembering that Thorismund had died



by Alboin's hand, the king of the Gepidæ heaved a deep sigh, whereupon another of his sons, making allusion to the linen leg-bands or putties worn by the Longobards, jeeringly said to them, "You look like white-legged mares." Instantly a Longobard made retort, "Go to the Asfeld battle-ground, and thou wilt learn how these mares kick, by the sight of thy brother's bones scattered on the soil like those of a broken-down colt." Thereupon every sword would have flashed forth, says the legend, but for the prompt action of the king, who, invoking the sacred laws of hospitality, girt Alboin with Thorismund's weapons. Whatever we may think of this tale, it is certain that Alboin returned home in triumph, and succeeded his father on the Longobard throne towards the year 565.

He was then a strong, daring, ambitious youth, and apparently somewhat favoured by the Empire. But the Gepidæ were no less valiant than the Longobards, and superior to them in number, so, as Thorismund's death could not be forgotten, the two nations seemed doomed to engage in a war of extermination. Luckily for the Longobards, however, a new tribe called the Avars now appeared upon the scene. These were of the same race as the Huns, and from the beginning of the fifth century had been settled on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Then, with the approval of Justinian, who wished to use them for his own ends, these Avars had migrated to the lower region of the Danube, led by a chief bearing the title of Chagan (Khan), and formed a powerful kingdom, helped by subsidies from the Emperor. Thus the Longobards, Gepidæ, and Avars were near neighbours in a region so wasted by continual warfare that the struggle to secure bare subsistence rendered them all equally restless and aggressive. It was at this moment that Justin suddenly decided to withdraw his accustomed subsidy to the Avars, proudly declaring

that the Empire should not stoop to pay tribute to Barbarians. Alboin promptly turned this opportunity to account by inviting the Avars to join with him in attacking the Gepidæ. "That tribe once destroyed," he said, "we shall be more at ease in this ravaged land, and can soon seize other territories from the Empire."

It seems evident that Alboin was already planning a descent upon Italy, and wished first to secure his rear by crushing the Gepidæ; otherwise it would be difficult to understand the terms of the bargain then made with the Avars. For the Longobards promised them one-half of the spoil taken from the Gepidæ, a third of their cattle, and the whole of the conquered territory. Also, when the Longobards had marched away, the Avars were to have the right of occupying and owning their lands, unless they came back to resume possession of them. So the Gepidæ were confronted by two enemies at once. It is true they had a right to expect assistance from the Emperor; but he adhered to the usual Eastern policy of leaving the Barbarians to exterminate one another, and remained an almost passive spectator; merely giving them to understand that his forces would keep the Avars in check. Thereupon the Gepidæ made a very furious attack upon the Longobards, hoping first to crush them and then the Avars. But they were met by Alboin, who suddenly marched his army against them, routed them, slew their king, Cunimund, with his own hand, and cutting off his head, had the skull converted into a goblet to be used at state banquets, according to barbarian custom. As we shall presently see, he paid dearly for this savage act. But, for the moment, his victory was complete. It is said that 40,000 Gepidæ were slain, and at any rate history mentions the tribe no more. Enormous spoil was carried off, and a very large number of prisoners, who either took service in the conqueror's army or were reduced to

slavery. Cunimund's daughter, Rosamund, was one of the captives, and Alboin was so fascinated by the maiden's charms that he determined to marry her, in spite of her horrified repugnance from a union with her father's murderer. So the marriage was celebrated without delay, although Alboin's first wife, Hlotsuintha, daughter of Hlotocar, king of the Franks, had barely expired. After this the bridegroom undertook the invasion of Italy.

He must have been aware of the defenceless state of that country. Many important cities were garrisoned by a mere handful of men, while others had barely enough to hold the walls ; Pavia alone was prepared to offer a stubborn defence. The exhausted and disaffected inhabitants were not likely to support the Byzantines, who were much detested, even by the clergy. As for the last remnants of the Goths scattered about Italy, they were, of course, ready to join the first horde that should cross the Alps. Narses, already recalled and stripped of his command, was lingering in retirement at Naples, and possibly rejoicing over the ruin that had followed his own overthrow. His successor, Longinus, had already arrived, but with so small a force that he was compelled to seek refuge in Ravenna. Accordingly, the gates of Italy were open to the foe.

On the 2nd of April, 568, the Longobards evacuated Pannonia, and marching through Enona (Laibach), and the valley of the Save, crossed the Julian Alps, and advanced into Venetia. They brought their women, children, old folk, and household gear in a train of waggons which served as shelters by night. From a picture of rather later date, painted by order of Queen Theodolinda, we see that these barbarians were garbed in wide linen robes of various colours with breeches laced up in front, and that their hair was cut short at the back of

the head, but parted over the forehead in long side-locks. As usual the Longobard host comprised a motley throng of Bavarians, Bulgarians, Gepidæ, Swabians, and more especially Saxons, numbering, it was said, no less than 20,000. Almost all these tribes were professedly of the Arian creed, although they had some pagans amongst them ; but they were not intolerant in religious matters. There is much uncertainty regarding their numerical strength, which has been variously calculated by the chroniclers at from 20,000 to 120,000 fighting men. The army cannot have been a large one ; but if the Saxons alone counted 20,000, and could abandon the campaign later on without the Longobards being too much weakened to pursue their course of conquest, it would be absurd to believe that the latter could have numbered no more than 20,000 in all. The most general estimate is that they had from 60,000 to 70,000 fighting men, by no means a large force, remembering the losses they must have suffered, and the necessity of planting garrisons in the principal cities they captured. Probably, however, their losses were easily replaced by remnants of the Gothic forces, and possibly also by some disbanded Byzantine soldiery, among whom no few barbarians were to be found.

According to most authorities, Alboin had crossed the frontiers of Italy by the month of May, 568, and quickly constituted a Duchy at Cividale in Friuli,<sup>1</sup> under the rule of his cousin Gisulf and a sufficient military force. He thus secured possession of an important strategic position, that was, virtually, one of the gates of Italy. In fact, it enabled him to guard the passage of the frontier, and to cover his own retreat in case of need. But all went well with the Longobards : the Franks being absorbed in civil warfare at home, and the Byzantines paralysed by lack

<sup>1</sup> The word Friuli is derived from Alboin's Duchy of Forum Julii.

of men and money ; accordingly, one after another, the cities of Italy surrendered to the foe. The Patriarch of Aquileia quickly withdrew to Grado and fixed his abode there ; but the Bishop of Treviso, learning that Alboin was tolerant regarding religion, begged him to respect all the Church property of his diocese, and the request being promptly granted, opened the city gates to him. Thereupon Vicenza and Verona did the same. But Padua, Monselice, and Mantua, being fortified towns, refused to surrender, so that Alboin was forced to pass the winter in Venetia. Fortunately for him, cold and snow were succeeded by a season of abundance in that fertile land, so that he was able to find sustenance for his army. Then, leaving Padua and Monselice untouched, he captured Mantua, after which success, Brescia, Bergamo, and Trent made surrender with all their territories. Finally, on the 3rd of September, 569, even Milan decided to yield to him seeing that its ruined walls had been only partially rebuilt by Narses, and the Bishop of Milan retired to Genoa. The beginning of the Longobard rule may be said to date from this event, although it was still limited to Northern Italy for the moment.

Nevertheless, Piacenza, Cremona, and other cities on the Po were still holding out, partly owing to the strength of their walls, and partly because aid could reach them from Ravenna by river. But, as we have previously said, Pavia alone made a prolonged, and truly stubborn defence. Already a very important city and afterwards the capital of the Longobard kingdom, it was not only strongly fortified, but also strongly garrisoned, and therefore contrived to hold out for three consecutive years (569-72). Alboin, accordingly, left part of his army to carry on the siege and proceeded to conquer other towns in Northern and Central Italy, such as Parma, Reggio, Modena, Bologna, and Imola. He also



seized the Furlo Pass and pushed on to Urbino. However, besides Ravenna and Pavia, even Padua, Monselice, Cremona, Piacenza, Genoa, many towns of the Riviera, together with the five cities of the future Pentapolis, *i.e.*, Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Sinigaglia, and Ancona were still holding out for the Empire.

Before extending their operations, the Longobards should have sought to consolidate their newly-gained dominions, by reducing the cities still held by the Byzantines. But as, unlike other barbarians, they had never been subjected for long to the discipline of the Empire and the Catholic Church; their primitive Germanic character survived comparatively intact, and they never acquired any real political aptitude, nor any faculty for organisation. In fact, they soon began to fight in a desultory fashion without any commander-in-chief, any settled plan of action, or even any settled purpose. Several bands scattered in different directions to fight on their own account. Some marched away to the south, where they laid the foundations of the Duchies of Spoleto and Benevento, which afterwards became thoroughly independent states. The rest of Southern Italy, and more especially the shores of the Adriatic and Mediterranean, remained imperial. Naples and Rome were specially staunch to the Empire, and were able to maintain free communication with Ravenna, thanks to their possession of Perugia which, although surrounded by places in Longobard hands, remained almost invariably faithful to its liege sovereign. Meanwhile the invaders not only carried on their campaigns and sieges with divided forces and without any settled scheme; but between 569 and 571 certain Longobard bands from North Italy undertook an expedition on their own account against the Franks of Southern Gaul. They forgot the risk of inciting a very powerful foe to pursue them across the Alps and seize their newly-

won territories which had yet to be consolidated. More than once their reckless attacks were defeated, and they would have been seriously worsted had the Franks been less distracted by intestine strife. Good fortune seemed always to attend them. For, on the one hand, their expeditions against the Franks led to none of the fatal consequences that might have been expected; while, on the other, no difficulties occurred to check their triumphs in Italy. In 572, after a three-years' siege, even Pavia was forced to surrender, and afterwards became the capital of the kingdom.

Alboin entered Theodoric's palace in triumph, and, notwithstanding his previous resolve to revenge himself on the citizens, treated them with humanity. In the spring of 573 (or according to some authorities, of 572), he expired in his palace at Verona. Minute details of his death are to be found in a somewhat fantastic and legendary narrative. At a State banquet one day—so runs the tale—Alboin seized the bowl made of King Cunimund's skull and invited his queen, Rosamund, to "take a draught in her father's company." The insult cut her to the quick, and she resolved to avenge it. She first revealed her purpose to the King's foster-brother, Helmichis; but as the latter disliked staining his own hands with his brother's blood, he advised her to consult a certain Peredeus, who was a man of great daring and physical strength. But finding that even Peredeus shrank from doing the deed, the Queen went to him in the dress of a waiting maid with whom he had an intrigue, and as soon as she was alone with him threw off her disguise and threatened to reveal their meeting to the King if he refused any longer to obey her commands. So the murder was finally arranged. One afternoon, when the drunken monarch was sleeping off the effects of his mid-day

potations, Rosamund tied up the sword that hung ready to his hand at the head of the couch, in such-wise as to prevent it from being unsheathed. Then, presently, Peredeus slipped into the chamber and fell upon Alboin, who, after vainly attempting to seize his sword, defended himself for a while with a footstool, but was finally slain by his assailant. Rosamund then bestowed her hand on Helmichis, hoping to secure the throne by his aid; but the Longobard Dukes were so indignant at the crime, that the guilty pair were soon obliged to fly for their lives. So they implored Longinus, Narses' successor, to send a vessel to their aid, and he despatched one from Ravenna up the Po. In this manner they contrived to escape by ship with a handful of soldiers and Alboin's daughter, Albsuinda. Next, according to the legend, Rosamund conceived the idea of marrying Longinus, and to that effect administered poison to her husband while he was taking a bath. But Helmichis instantly discovered the deadly nature of the draught, and forced his wife at the sword's point to drain the goblet to the dregs. Thus both perished together. Longinus then despatched the child Albsuinda to Constantinople, together with all the jewels her fugitive mother had borne off from Verona. In Ranke's opinion, this legend proves that grave discord prevailed among the Longobards at the time; one party being in favour of the Byzantines, the other opposed to them. Now, however, the indignation excited by the murder of Alboin, overthrew all Rosamund's schemes and procured the triumph of the national party.

But dissension was also rife among the Dukes. They elected Cleph, Duke of Bergamo, as Alboin's successor, but all we know about him is that, after reigning for eighteen months, he was killed by a slave (575). Meanwhile the same uncertain course of policy had been

pursued, *i.e.*, with no fixed plan of action. Even in 569 and 570, as we have already noted, some of the Dukes had attacked the Franks and suffered defeat at their hands. Another equally ineffectual assault on them had been undertaken by the Saxon auxiliaries of the Longobard host, with the object of trying to force a way back to their own land. This Saxon contingent comprised 20,000 men, and as the Longobards refused to allow them to settle in Italy, *proprio jure*—*i.e.*, maintaining their own institutions and following their own customs—they determined to leave the country. So, in 573, they started off with their families and all their belongings, after obtaining a free pass from the Franks, who were naturally well pleased that so large a force should desert the Longobard ranks. Nevertheless, the latter, thirsting for spoil, resumed their ill-planned aggressions in 574-76, but were again decidedly repulsed. At last an agreement was patched up, and there was peace for a while between the two nations. But this peace, while securing the Longobards from external attack—at a time when the Byzantines were too much absorbed in the Persian War to take the field in Italy—also served to foment internal discord. In fact, when Cleph was killed in 575, the Dukes could not agree as to the choice of a new king, and ended by doing without one and arranging that every Duke should rule his territories in his own name as an independent sovereign. They followed this plan for ten years, but then, being again threatened by dangers from abroad, were compelled to decide on restoring the monarchy. Meanwhile, Longobard Italy was divided into thirty-six duchies, but the names of a few only (such as Pavia, Brescia, Trent, Cividale, Milan, Spoleto, and Benevento)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pavia, Milan, Bergamo, Forogiulio (Cividale) or Frinli, Spoleto, Turin, Asti, Benevento, Ivrea, Isle of St. Julian on the Lake of Orta, Verona, Vicenza, Treviso, Ceneda, Parma, Piacenza, Chiusi, Lucca,

are authentically known to us. There is some uncertainty about the designations of most of the other duchies, and little is known regarding the names of their rulers.

This new state of things was undoubtedly hurtful to the native inhabitants. At first the Longobard rule, which, although established by force of arms, had, after all, been feebly opposed, proved a positive relief to the country by freeing it from the unbearable fiscal exactions of the Byzantines, and by founding a more settled government gave it greater security than it had known since Narses vented his spite at being deprived of the command by leaving everything in disorder, not to say anarchy. Paulus Diaconus bears witness to the improved conditions of the country during Alboin's reign. In fact, after mentioning the abundant harvest that was reaped in the first year of the Longobard rule, he adds that the population of Italy "grew as fast as oats." He makes no allusion as yet to the division of the soil that was accomplished shortly after this time; therefore it may be supposed that at first the Longobards only seized such landed property and revenue as the Byzantine fiscal authorities had already acquired from the Goths.

Paulus Diaconus, however, goes on to state that, after the monarchy had lapsed, things went very badly during the interregnum, since instead of one master there were now thirty-six, each of whom taxed the country at his own pleasure. Many rich Roman nobles possessed of vast estates were put to death by the Dukes who seized their lands. Others were reduced to the condition of tributaries and forced to pay the conquerors one-third

Firenze and Fermo. The Duchies of Rimini, Brescello, Reggio, Istria, and a few others are also recorded; but whether they were really constituted at this period or at a later date has not been accurately ascertained.



of their income, *tertiam partem suarum frugum*. It may be noted that this was worse than having to yield one-third of the land, since it deprived the Italians of all free ownership. Then, too, numerous churches were sacked by the Arian invaders, who likewise killed many priests as well as nobles in order to confiscate their property; so that the inhabitants of the country were robbed and over-taxed in every way.

The Pope and the people of Rome were in a highly critical position, surrounded and threatened by the Longobards on all sides, and, more particularly, by the Duke of Spoleto and Benevento. Communication with Ravenna was so continually cut off that, although the death of Pope John III. took place in July, 574, the consecration of his successor, Benedict I., had to be deferred for ten months on account of the impossibility of receiving the imperial sanction at an earlier date; while the next Pope, Pelagius II., elected in 579, had to be resigned to assuming the mitre without it. This state of things finally led the Romans to decide on organising a special army for their own defence, and inventing some form of self-government. For the moment, however, they still placed their hope in the Byzantines, and sought help from them. But no aid could be expected from the incapable Longinus. It is true that Baduarius, a kinsman of the Emperor, had been despatched from Constantinople to supersede him; but in passing through Campania, not far from Naples, he was defeated in a skirmish with the Longobards, and soon died of his wounds (576). Accordingly, the Romans determined on making a direct appeal to the Emperor, and sent ambassadors to him with a gift of three thousand pounds of gold, imploring him to despatch an armed force to protect the Pope and the Eternal City from Barbarian and Arian attacks, and thus maintain the authority both of

the Empire and the Church. But in 578 the Emperor Justin II. had gone mad, and Tiberius II., who ruled in his stead and afterwards succeeded him, was too busy with the Persian War to be able to give Italy any help. He therefore advised the Roman envoys to use the gold they had brought as a means of inducing the Longobards to keep the peace. If unsuccessful in that quarter, he added, they might try next to bribe the Franks to attack them. It is certain that the Byzantines were now reduced to such impotence in Italy that, in 579, the Duke of Spoleto was enabled to seize Classe on the Adriatic, the sea-port of Ravenna, which was retained by the Longobards down to the year 588. Even the Perugian lands were freely scoured by these Barbarians, and in 581 the Duke of Benevento laid siege to Naples, which made, however, a very valiant defence. About this time (the exact date is unknown) the monastery of Monte Cassino was sacked and destroyed, whereupon the brethren escaped to Rome, with the original MS. of St. Benedict's Rule, and founded a new cloister there.

During this *lacrimabile bellum*, as the chroniclers styled the war, Pope Pelagius II., forsaken by the Empire and menaced by the Longobards, made his first appeal to the Franks. On the 5th October, 580,<sup>1</sup> or, as some assert, in 581, he wrote to the Bishop of Auxerre, begging him to remind the Franks that, "as orthodox Christians, their duty to God pledged them to defend Rome and all Italy from that most infamous Longobard brood, whom they were bound to cast off unless they wished to share the certain doom by which that tribe would soon be overtaken." What seems stranger still, these negotiations were actually seconded by the Emperor himself, their necessity being continually urged upon him

<sup>1</sup> According to Weise, *Italien und die Longobardenherrscher*; Troya, on the contrary, dates it the 5th October, 581.

by Gregory the Apocrisarius, afterwards Gregory the Great, and one of the greatest men of that age. The Emperor Maurice, who succeeded to Tiberius II. in 582, sent the Franks the sum of fifty thousand *aurei*, to induce them to turn their arms against the Longobards. Accordingly, the latter were suddenly assailed by so overwhelming a force that they were compelled to take refuge behind the walls of fortified cities. But, as usual, the Franks were again distracted by civil strife at home, and therefore easily bribed by lavish gifts to hasten back to their own land.

Here it should be noted that from this moment certain clearly-traced characteristics begin to emerge which were continually reproduced in the subsequent course of Italian history. Owing to the Longobard conquest, the Peninsula is already split into separate fragments, which are never again brought into permanent reunion. Now, too, the civil and religious powers stand opposed, and we see the beginning of the struggle between Church and State that is to last throughout the Middle Ages, and endures to the present day. At this moment the Popes first adopted the course of policy towards the Franks that they unceasingly followed for two centuries, that proved triumphant in the days of Pippin and Charlemagne, and has never been wholly abandoned by the Church. But when the Franks had evacuated Italy the Pope once more made appeal to the Emperor. On the 4th October, 584, he wrote to his Apocrisarius, Gregory, enjoining him to explain to the Byzantine Government the full extent of Italy's needs and perils (*necessitates vel pericula totius Italiae*) and all the continual tribulations inflicted by the Longobards on the Duchy of Rome, so as to induce the Emperor to despatch at least a Master of the Soldiery and a Duke to his aid, inasmuch as Decius the Exarch could afford no protection to Rome, having

barely sufficient strength to defend the other Italian provinces of the Empire. This memorable letter has an additional value from the fact of containing the first official mention of the title of Exarch. In 585 Smaragdus, or Smeraldus, arrived from Constantinople with a strong body of soldiers (*firmiter copiarum supplemento*). This man was certainly one of the first Exarchs, and he immediately set to work with notable skill and energy to renew the alliance with the Franks against the Longobards.

## CHAPTER II

### RESTORATION OF THE MONARCHY — ELECTION OF AUTHARI — HIS WARS WITH THE BYZANTINES AND FRANKS — HIS MARRIAGE WITH THEODELINDA — CONDITION OF THE VANQUISHED

IN consequence of the threatened alliance between the Byzantines and the Franks, the Longobards were compelled to take thought how to cope with the danger. Hence, in order to gain a united administration, and above all a united system of defence, they decided to reconstitute the monarchy. Calling an Assembly at Pavia, between the end of 584 and the beginning of 585, they chose Authari, son of Cleph, as their king. The next thing to be done was to furnish him with a patrimony and a civil list, so that he might possess a suitable maintenance and be able to remunerate the officials of his Court. To this end the dukes yielded him one-half of their possessions—those either robbed from slaughtered nobles or confiscated in other ways—but retained one-third of the revenue from estates owned by Romans. According to some writers, however, one-third of the land was now taken in exchange for that third of the revenue, and thus the original owners gained the advantage of being allowed to retain two-thirds of their freehold property. Therefore, as many more provinces had been recently annexed by the Longobards, it is very probable that the



allotment of newly acquired territory was arranged so as to compensate those who had been obliged to cede part of their private possessions to the king. This land question has been the theme of much learned dispute, and the words used by Paulus Diaconus in speaking of the subject have been twisted in numerous ways in order to extract evidence that he never gave, nor indeed could be qualified to give, regarding a matter on which it was difficult for a man living about two centuries later to have any accurate information. In fact, he merely states that the Dukes yielded half their substance to the king, and that all tributary inhabitants were divided among the conquerors (*"populi tamen adgravati per langobardos hospites partiunter,"* III., 16). It is impossible to infer from these words, as some writers have alleged, that the Romans were reduced to such degradation as to be little better than slaves of the soil; indeed, it may be said that this interpretation is in direct contradiction with the historian's words. For, after observing that the lapse of the monarchy caused grave injury to the Romans, he goes on to say, when recording its restoration, that "in this kingdom no man was over-taxed, oppressed, or stripped of his goods; justice was equally administered to all; no acts of robbery were committed; every one could go safely whithersoever he would." Had he meant to say that the state of things became much worse under King Authari, he certainly would not have expressed himself in those terms. Besides, it is an ascertained fact that during this reign everything went on, both in peace and war, with greater order and regularity than before; that the long duration of the Longobard rule was owed to the re-erection of the monarchy, and in some degree also to the personal efforts of King Authari.

Alarmed by the threatened agreement between the Byzantines and Franks, the Longobards attempted to

arrange an alliance with the latter—but without success ; and as the Franco-Byzantine pact was broken almost before it was concluded, independent campaigns were again undertaken on all sides. In 587 the Longobards were fighting the Byzantines in Friuli and Istria, and the following year took from them the fortified island of Comacina. At the same time Smaragdus finally recaptured Classis, and the Franks streamed down over the Splügen to give battle to the Longobards. But on this occasion Authari was prepared for war, and attacked the invaders with such impetuous valour that he routed them with immense slaughter. “*Tantaque ibi strages facta est de Francorum exercitu, quanta usque ibi non memoratur*” (Paulus Diaconus, III., 29).

The Emperor was already vexed with Smaragdus for neglecting to succour the Franks on the day of their defeat, and his anger was increased by the general's highly imprudent and intemperate conduct with regard to religious matters. In order to support the Emperor and put an end to a very futile and tiresome controversy, the Pope had condemned the *Three Chapters*, and pronounced that such condemnation had been already implicitly admitted by the Council of Chalcedon itself. Thereupon the people of Istria and Venice were stirred to such excitement as to threaten a real schism in the Church. Yet Smaragdus, instead of endeavouring to calm the public mind according to the instructions sent from Constantinople, adopted the violent measure of arresting certain bishops and bearing them off to prison at Ravenna. This act caused him to be recalled, and he was succeeded in 589 by the Exarch Romanus, who governed with far greater wisdom.

About this time Authari, being increasingly anxious to strengthen his position on the throne for the benefit of his own line, decided to take a wife, and asked the hand

of Theodelinda, daughter of Garibald, the Duke of Bavaria, whose territories marched with those of his overlord Childebert, King of the Franks. Authari chose this lady for political reasons, since in the event of hostilities with the Franks, an alliance with Bavaria might be of great service to him. It is said that, on receiving a favourable reply to his first suggestion of marriage, he disguised himself as one of the envoys and started off with the rest to make his formal demand to the princess (588). At first sight of his future bride he was so fascinated by her beauty that when, in obedience to custom, she served the envoys with wine, he could not refrain from secretly taking her hand and kissing it, thus betraying that he was her suitor. On the journey back Authari stood up in his stirrups the moment he had crossed the border of his own dominions, openly declared himself to all, and, hurling his axe into the trunk of a tree, cried aloud, "Thus strikes the King of the Longobards." But Childebert was so wrath at the news of the proposed alliance that he made war on Bavaria, and Theodelinda was compelled to make a hurried flight, escorted by her brother Gundwald, over the mountains to Verona, where the bridegroom came to receive her, and where the wedding was celebrated on May 5, 589.

Roused to fury by this marriage, the Franks suddenly swooped down upon Authari, who, being taken unawares, would have been worsted in the struggle had not a fresh outbreak of civil war in their own land compelled the foe to withdraw. Possibly too their retreat was hastened by the inundations which did such cruel havoc that year in Italy and Gaul that, according to Paulus Diaconus, no such flood had ever been seen since the Deluge. As a natural consequence, this disaster was followed by an outbreak of the black plague, of which Pope Pelagius II. was one of the numerous victims. The new Pontiff, anointed

on the 3rd of September, 590, was Gregory the Great, who was destined to play a prominent part in Italian history, and was frequently engaged in vigorous strife with the Longobards.

At the first moment of truce after these various calamities, Authari resumed the task of consolidating his kingdom and extending his conquests in Northern Italy. But the tale of his having marched on to Reggio in Calabria, and then exclaimed, "Authari's kingdom only ends here!" is entirely fabulous. The legend probably referred to Reggio in Æmilia; for the dukes of Spoleto and Benevento then held sway in Southern Italy, and it would have been impossible for Authari to move far from the northern provinces while the Emperor was continually urging the Franks to resume the war they were pledged to wage against the Longobards, and for which he had vainly supplied them with funds. "It was time," so the Emperor impatiently wrote to them, "to pass from words to deeds, *enarrata viriliter . . . peragere.*" Finally Romanus the Exarch contrived to conclude an agreement with them for a combined attack upon the Longobards. Accordingly, in the spring of 590, the Franks marched part of their army against Milan, while the rest advanced on Verona by the valley of the Adige. The Byzantines made a simultaneous advance from Ravenna, and many towns and several Longobard dukes voluntarily submitted to them. There was then much lurking disaffection among the dukes, some of their number being adverse to the restoration of the monarchy, and others having hoped to be chosen king instead of Authari. Profiting by their discontent, it had been settled by the terms of the agreement that in three days' time the Franks and Byzantines were to effect a junction and make a combined attack on the Longobards. The Byzantines were to signal their arrival by the smoke of a beacon fire lighted

on a neighbouring hill. But not one of these plans was carried out. The Franks only raided the land, and then suddenly withdrew, accusing the Byzantines of having left them unsupported without attempting to advance. On the other hand, the Exarch Romanus wrote to King Childebert, declaring "that he was on the point of surrounding the Longobards, when he learnt that the Franks were treating for peace with Authari. Accordingly he had been compelled to give the signal for retreat just when the moment had come to sweep Italy clear of that most villainous Longobard brood." Also, he presently expressed his hope that the king would resume the war "by despatching trustworthy captains (*dignos duces*) to Italy, who would not be satisfied with merely capturing some of the Romans and pillaging their lands." But nothing more was done in the matter. The fact was that although both Franks and Byzantines were equally desirous to expel the Longobards from Italy, both wished to seize the country for themselves. Therefore they acted in concert while attacking their common foe, but at the first chance of victory immediately divided, each nation acting not only on its own account, but also to the other's detriment. Naturally all this proved an advantage to Authari, and he was already gaining the upper hand, when sudden death overtook him on the 5th of September, 590.

Flavius Authari may be regarded as one of the chief founders of the Longobard kingdom. In assuming a Roman name, he followed the example of Odovacar and other Barbarian leaders and, apparently, as a proof of his desire to make terms with the Empire. But Odovacar and Theodoric came to rule Italy as delegates of the Empire; whereas Alboin and the Longobards settled there of their own initiative, in their own name, and the new monarchy they founded was not only an inde-



pendent state, but frequently at war with the Byzantines for the purpose of driving them from the country. The Longobards were the first barbarians who proclaimed real laws of their own in Italy, and enforced the same without any reference to the Emperor. Neither did they permit the Romans to retain any of the privileges granted them by Theodoric. In short, the Barbarians were now at last masters of the country, and would recognise no other laws, nor authority, than their own. This greatly contributed to the diffusion of a mistaken idea that Italians were reduced if not to actual slavery, at least to the condition of domestic labourers, *i.e.*, of semi-servitude. Some writers, as we have previously said, tried to support this theory by twisting the words of Paulus Diaconus. Another argument they were wont to adduce in its favour was, that although the Longobard law fixes the amount of blood-money (*guidrigild*) to be exacted for the murder of a Longobard, it assigns no penalty for the murder of a Roman. This proved, they said, that the conquerors attached no value to the life of the vanquished, because the latter were slaves. But it is thoroughly preposterous to draw so weighty an inference from the mere silence of the law on the point in question. Rather, as Capponi has remarked, this silence might also imply that the penalty for killing one of the conquered race was fixed by the usual custom. According to Sybel, however, the silence might be understood to prove that theoretically, at any rate, no difference was made between the life of a Roman and that of a Longobard, hence the penalty would be identical in either case. Nevertheless it is hard to believe that the conquered would not have been treated far worse than the conquerors.

However this may be, the once widely-spread theory of the Romans' state of servitude, is now cast aside. It is rather difficult to comprehend how it could have won

such general acceptance, regardless of the enormous difficulties to be smoothed away, in order to make it credible. For if the Longobards had robbed the Romans of all personal freedom, how is it possible that there should be no explicit mention of so serious a fact either in the chronicles, laws, or public and private documents of the period? Seeing, too, that during the continual Longobard-Byzantine wars many towns and territories repeatedly changed hands, being captured and recaptured by either side in turn, we should be driven to suppose that the inhabitants of such towns and territories passed from freedom to slavery and *vice-versa* without one cry of rejoicing or despair being heard; without one attempt at revolt; and without any record being preserved of such events! Besides, some of the great landowners had estates situated partly in the Longobard and partly in the Byzantine dominions. Are we to believe that the owners and cultivators of such lands were slaves on one part of their soil and free men on another? In the letters of Gregory the Great we find mention of Roman citizens inhabiting the Longobard territories of Brescia and Pisa. Were they free men, or did they become slaves when established on Longobard soil? In such case, must we believe that they had voluntarily forsaken Byzantine lands where they were free to submit to slavery under Longobard rule? Also, if we admit the supposition urged by some writers, that city artisans who owned no scrap of the soil retained their freedom, while landed proprietors whose property had been divided were reduced to bondage, in that case the condition of the working classes would have been far superior to that of great landowners, nobles, and senators! In short, we are forced to conclude that, in spite of all the learned arguments adduced in its favour, the theory of Italian servitude under the Longobard rule is totally confuted by the mass of opposing facts weighing against it.

## NOTE.

It may be of use to give an outline of some of the numerous disputes which arose regarding the condition of the Italians during the Longobard rule, owing to the varied interpretation of Paulus Diaconus's words.

The main dispute turned on the two following passages. The first tells us that: *His diebus multi nobilium Romanorum ob cupiditatem interfecti sunt. Reliqui vero per hospites divisi, ut tertiam partem suarum frugum Longobardis persolverent, tributarii efficiuntur* (II. 32). This was interpreted as signifying that the Longobards killed many of the Roman nobles, and that the others (*reliqui*)—i.e., all the rest of the inhabitants—were divided among the Longobard “guests,” and being compelled to pay them a third of their revenues (*tertiam partem suarum frugum*), were therefore their tributaries. But apart from the fact that the term *reliqui* undoubtedly refers to the *nobiles*, how could *all* the Romans be made tributaries and forced to pay a third of their income, since *all* would necessarily include even those who possessed nothing? Then, too, Paulus Diaconus makes at no point the slightest allusion to the supposed enslavement of the Romans credited by some authorities, and indeed such enslavement would be in open contradiction, as we have already remarked, with what he states in a subsequent sentence. On this head, Sybel has observed (p. 429) that the passage cannot be interpreted to mean that even the poor were divided *per longobardos hospites*, since *hospitalitas* could only mean a relation existing between the Roman *proprietor* and the Longobard, the latter being the *patronus*, not the *hospes* of tenants (*coloni*) and field-labourers.

The other passage of Paulus that has fed the dispute refers to what took place on the restoration of the Monarchy, when Authari was elected King. After stating that the Dukes gave half their property to the King, for his personal use and the payment of his officers or adherents, *omnem substantiarum suarum medietatem*, Paulus Diaconus adds: *Populi tamen adgravati per longobardos hospites partiuntur* (III. 16). The term *populi adgravati* led to the belief that the inhabitants were more cruelly taxed after the King's election, because the Dukes tried to recoup themselves at the public expense for what they had been forced to cede to their monarch. But Paulus Diaconus neither said nor implied anything of the kind, for he declares, on the contrary, that the people fared much better under the Monarchy. In the Longobard kingdom, he tells us, *nulla erat violentia, nullæ struebantur insidiæ; nemo aliquem iniuste angariabat, nemo spoliabat;*

*non erant furta, non latrocinia ; unusquisque quo libebat securus sine timore pergebat. (ibid.).* Accordingly, the only overburdened inhabitants were those who had been already made tributaries, and were therefore divided among the Longobard proprietors who had ceded to the King one-half of the estates they held in their own right ; that is to say, one-half of the confiscated estates of slaughtered Roman nobles. As before remarked, it may be also supposed that after the aggrandisement of the kingdom a fresh division of the land may have been made, and consequently a fresh allotment of conquered tributaries among the victors. This, however, is a mere inference, for Paulus Diaconus says nothing to that effect.

Next, seeing that in this second passage he makes no further allusion to the revenues from the land (*frugum*), so certain writers have, with some reason, taken it for granted that, under Authari's rule, there was no division of the revenue, but only of the land, of which one-third had been handed over to the Longobards and two-thirds left in the free possession of the Romans, an arrangement that proved advantageous to both parties. This reading of the passage is supported by a variant (only existing, however, in a single codex, and that one of somewhat doubtful authenticity), which instead of the words *per hospites partiuntur*, has, *hospitia partiuntur*, meaning therefore that neither the people nor the revenue was divided, but that the estates, *hospitia*, were divided instead. This is all that can be said upon the subject ; and it is a futile task to ransack the pages of Paulus Diaconus for things he never said and probably knew little about, having lived at a much later period. This indeed may account for the vagueness of his expressions ; but we have no right to profit by that vagueness, in order to twist his words to our own liking.

## CHAPTER III

### ORGANISATION OF THE LONGOBARD KINGDOM AND OF THE BYZANTINE GOVERNMENT

WE must now try to gain a clear although summary idea of the form of government established in our country by the Longobards, since if at any time, as some writers have asserted, the thread of Roman tradition was entirely broken in Italy and every trace of Roman laws and institutions obliterated, this could have only taken place during the Longobard rule. For this rule not only lasted longer than any other Barbarian domination, but it is a well known fact that the Ostrogoths continued to enforce Roman laws and institutions, that the Byzantines themselves used the same laws and institutions, and that the Franks, when they made their appearance later on, were already Romanised to a certain extent. On the other hand, the Longobards, as we have seen, had been brought into much slighter contact with the Empire, and had openly warred against it for the purpose of expelling it from Italy. But, having long forsaken the ancient seats of their tribe, and long wandered about the world more or less in the fashion of a mercenary host, they were naturally unable to maintain intact their primitive Germanic institutions. Naturally, too, the laws they now had were not exclusively evolved from earlier forms into which certain radical changes had unavoidably crept



owing to the novel conditions in which the Barbarians now lived, and their intercourse with other races. Nevertheless, they still remained a congeries of separate bodies and incapable of forming a compact and united nation. This was the cause of the perpetual disorder that reigned among them, that prevented them from completing the conquest of Italy, and that finally led to their downfall.

The Longobard Monarchy was neither exclusively hereditary nor exclusively elective. The King could be elected by the people, but sometimes the people merely ratified the election of the person designated by their chiefs, whose choice generally fell upon a member of some special family or clan. Occasionally the people transferred their elective rights to others. Thus, on the death of Authari, they authorised his widow Theodelinda to choose a second husband, who was to be and was actually proclaimed the new King of the Longobards. The monarch was the civil and military head of the nation; he commanded the army, and he administered justice with the assistance of coadjutors chosen by himself from time to time. The laws issued in his name were based on usages already adopted by the people, and after being put into shape by the King in concert with the chiefs, were then submitted for approval to the general assembly of the people, who had to decide whether those laws fittingly represented the customs in question. The King was also empowered to issue orders or decrees on his own authority, and in course of time, and owing to the persistent influence of Roman law, these royal decrees increased in number and importance. But the special characteristic of this Longobard kingdom was the fact of its being divided into Duchies under Dukes appointed for life by the King, and who were more like independent viceroys than real officers of the Crown. They not only strove to obtain greater independence, but also, and

occasionally with success, to secure hereditary powers, as in the case of Friuli, Spoleto, and Benevento. For the Duke of Spoleto assumed the title of *Dux gentis Longobardorum*, while the Duke of Benevento became a really autonomous and hereditary sovereign. Nevertheless, other Dukes nearer at hand failed to achieve this result, inasmuch as the King naturally opposed it in order to keep them subject to his own authority. Hence there was perpetual strife between the throne and the magnates, which led to continual revolts, brought many Kings to a violent end, and so shattered the strength of the kingdom that it could never be solidly organised. Thus, after more than two centuries of domination, violence, and tyranny, the Longobards had failed to make Italy German, and ended by becoming Romanised themselves and virtually merged in the nation they had conquered.

The Longobards, however, had certain genuine officers of the Crown called *gastaldi* who were nominated by the King and could be dismissed at his pleasure. They administered the *Curtis Regia*—i.e., all the property of the Crown—and therefore resided on the Crown lands of different Duchies. They kept watch over the Dukes and acted as judges and military leaders within their own jurisdiction. The Longobard monarchs always tried to raise the number of these *gastaldi*, as the best means of strengthening the royal power and giving some organic unity to their kingdom. Accordingly, in course of time they always preferred to place newly-won territory in the charge of *gastaldi* rather than of Dukes. The King also had certain personal attendants called *gasindi*, who were familiars or courtiers, and also gained wider power in course of time. A more important institution was a Ducal Council, from which, as a rule, Romans were naturally excluded; but to which bishops were admitted, although, at first, only if they were Romans. It is plain

that institutions such as these could not suffice to consolidate the Monarchy on a solid basis. The Dukes always tried to ape the functions of royalty in every particular. They administered justice and commanded the troops in their own Duchies, undertook military expeditions on their own account ; and even occasionally, by order of the King, assumed the entire or partial command of the national army. They too had *gasindi* of their own in attendance, officials acting as *gastaldi*, together with others styled "sculdasci" (*Sculdahis*), all exercising different degrees of administrative, judicial, and military power. The nomination of Ducal officers belonged by right to the Crown ; but the Dukes always tried to usurp that right and often with success. For instance, there were no royal *Gastaldi* in the Duchy of Benevento, but only officials appointed by the Dukes.

It has been much discussed whether the Longobards in general, and more particularly their Dukes, resided in the country or in the cities. But there is reason to think that they must have inhabited the towns, and especially the principal cities. Each of these comprised a territory of its own, determined by the ancient Roman circumscription, on which were based the bishops' dioceses, and which were identical with the so-called *Giudicarie*, or judicial circuits of the Longobard Duchies. This territory, together with the town it encircled, was styled a *Civitas*, and the mass of the Longobards, and particularly their Dukes, undoubtedly abode within its limits. But that they should have resided habitually within the walls of cities teeming *ab antiquo* with a Roman population is a theory easier of suggestion than proof. In consequence of the Germanic invasion, the centre of gravity had been transferred to country districts. The Germans were a rural people, ignorant of cities ; later on, country castles gave birth to feudalism, the leading institution of the

mediæval world ; and the great feudal lords of the country are continually referred to as Teutons or Lombards in our chroniclers' pages.

The Byzantines still held sway in all Italian places of which the Longobards had failed to gain possession, and the fact of this forced contact naturally caused some changes in the institutions of either race. The Pragmatic Sanction prescribed the separation of the civil from the military power. In fact, the *Præfectus Prætorio* resident in Ravenna, the *Vicarius Urbis* in Rome, and a *Vicarius Italie* in Genoa were the three heads of the civil administration. Law-suits between Romans were decided by *Judices Provinciarum* nominated by the bishops. The Præfecture of Italy, after being separated from that of Rhætia and the Islands, had become more and more restricted and now comprised only a few portions of the peninsula. Sicily had a Prefect of its own ; Sardinia and Corsica were under the Exarch of Africa. But as warfare was still going on, and could not be brought to an end for a while, so, notwithstanding the existence of Præfects and Vicars, both the civil and the military power were virtually vested in the Byzantine Dukes. These latter were charged with the government and defence of all the Empire's remaining provinces, some of which were not only separate, but also far distant from one another ; they were also face to face with Longobard Dukes, who were likewise separate and independent potentates. So henceforth Italy became increasingly divided and subdivided.

The bureaucratic and centralising tendencies of the Byzantines made it necessary for the Empire to be represented in Italy by a supreme head invested, like the Emperor, with full authority in every branch of the Government. This head was the Exarch, who also bore the lofty name of Patrician, and whose seat of residence

was at Ravenna. The title of Exarch was usually conferred upon any general commanding a foreign expedition, and in this sense it has been rightly attributed by some writers to Belisarius and Narses. But it acquired an entirely distinct meaning and value in Italy from being solely bestowed on the leader who governed them in the name and as the representative of the Emperor, thus continuing, as it were, in another form the task formerly entrusted to Theodoric. Therefore, Belisarius and Narses were never Exarchs in this sense of the word, but only heads of the army and wielding military power. Who was the first Exarch in Italy is a much-disputed point. The earliest official mention of this title exists—as we have mentioned elsewhere—in a letter from Pope Pelagius II., of October 4, 584, which some writers say should be dated 585 instead. Decius, however, was certainly an Exarch, and before him, as asserted by some, Baduarius (575-76) also bore that title.

Decius only governed for a short time, and was succeeded by Smaragdus in 585. Theoretically, the Byzantine Dukes were subordinates of the Exarch, by whom they were appointed; but as all the Dukes had separate territories, often at a great distance one from the other, practically they were independent rulers. Thus the Exarchate gradually became little more than a Duchy, merely raised above the rest by the fact of being governed by the supreme representative of the Empire.

In this more restricted sense of the word, the Exarchate extended from the Adige to the Marecchia, from the Adriatic to the Apennines, and comprised within its limits Ravenna and Bologna with their respective territories, and other cities of minor importance. Neighbouring on the Exarchate were the Maritime Pentapolis (Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Sinigaglia, Ancona), and the Inland Pentapolis (or *Annonaria Castellorum*) of Urbino,



Fossombrone, Jesi, Cagli, and Gubbio, which, united with the first, formed the Decapolis, according to some writers, whereas others maintain that this name was applied to the second Pentapolis.<sup>1</sup>

In the seventh century the Byzantines also possessed the Duchy of Venice, part of Istria, Apulia, and Calabria (the territory of Otranto), Bruttium (the modern Calabria), Naples, Rome, and Genoa, with the Riviera. In general terms it may be said that all the cities on the coast of the Adriatic and Mediterranean were retained by the Byzantines, as the Longobards were never a seafaring people. The Exarch was commissioned to govern the *Regnum et Principatum totius Italiæ*, because the Empire always adhered to ancient formulas, even when they no longer corresponded with the actual state of things. At first, the Exarch nominated the Dukes and the Masters of the Soldiery, two separate offices which were often confused with each other, although the latter was inferior to the former and more exclusively military; inasmuch as the Master of the Soldiery in Rome only had command of the city troops, whereas the Duke commanded the troops of the whole Duchy. In reality, Dukes and Masters alike finally exercised both judicial and military functions, and, sometimes, administrative as well, so that there was little difference between them. The Duchies were divided into sections under the rule of Tribunes, who were often confused with Counts, resided in cities of secondary rank, and were dependents of the Duke or Master of the Soldiery, holding residence in the principal cities and commanding the whole Duchy. The number and extent of these Duchies varied according to the exigencies of war. Before the coming of the Longo-

<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as the inland Pentapolis was also supposed to include Osimo, Umana, Montefeltro, the Valvense territory, and Luccoli. Vide Bury, "History of the Later Roman Empire," vol. ii. p. 146, note 4.

bards, several Duchies had been already constituted on the frontiers near the Alps, with bodies of soldiery styled *limitanei*, or borderers, who in times of peace cultivated the lands allotted to them, and had the right of bequeathing these to their children with the same obligation of defending the frontier. As we know, there was a very general tendency among the Byzantines to make all offices hereditary. After the Longobard invasion, and the consequent division and subdivision of Italy that ensued, the border stations were multiplied. Gradually they were to be found in almost every direction, inasmuch as the Byzantines had to keep off enemies on all sides. So new Duchies had to be continually formed, varying in number and extent as the tide of war advanced or receded.

The Exarch, who, as the Emperor's representative, had the right of nominating the Dukes, claimed for the same reason the right of intervening in ecclesiastical matters. Deeming it to be his duty to recall his subjects to the true faith, he threw bishops into prison, superintended and sanctioned the election of the Pope, and sometimes received orders from Constantinople to seize the Pontiff's person. Naturally, this state of things gave rise to endless quarrels, and not with Rome alone. The Byzantine Government was always in fear lest the Exarch should set up as an independent power; in fact, more than one had tried to do so. Hence efforts were made to weaken the Exarch's power, and enhance on the other hand the authority of the Dukes, by causing the Emperor either to nominate them himself, or to ratify their nomination when the people began to elect them. Consequently the Byzantine Dukes were not only more divided from one another and from the Exarch as they proceeded to split the country into pieces, but ended by freeing themselves from their allegiance and

occasionally proclaiming their absolute independence. This was the case, as we shall see, in Venice, Naples, Rome, and even Ravenna.

It will be remembered how, in 584, Pope Pelagius II. had complained that Rome possessed neither a Duke nor a Master of Soldiery. But by 592 Rome already had a Master of Soldiery to defend the walls, and in 625 the *Exercitus Romanus* (although first recorded in the "Pontifical Book" at the date of 640) officially attended the Pope's election. Also, not long afterwards, we find Gregory the Great summoning the inhabitants of the Duchy to arms in order to defend the city walls against the Longobards, from which it may be inferred that Rome was already on the road to self-government. For a long time there was a tendency to believe that every vestige of Roman law and Roman institutions had disappeared during the Longobard rule, together with every trace of the former municipal bodies. It has been frequently asserted that the ancient *Curia* was reduced to the work of collecting taxes, and that the Decurions were liable for the full amount, even if they had failed to gather it. Accordingly, it was no longer an honour to belong to the *Curia*, but rather an insupportable burden that all tried to shirk, even at the cost of voluntary exile; nor is there any documentary record of that institution after the year 625. It was also asserted that even in Byzantine Italy, where the Roman law was in full vigour, municipal administration had disappeared, having passed into the hands of the bishops and of quasi Government officials such as the *Curator* and the *Defensor*. The same writers go on to say that in Longobard Italy all civil business was managed by the *Curtis Regia*, the Dukes, the Gasindi, and, later on, by the Bishops. But most of these suppositions and theories are now rejected, even by those who formerly advocated them very zealously.

Indeed, were there any ground for those theories, it would be extremely hard to understand how the Longobards had contrived to govern and carry on the administrative affairs of the Italian inhabitants who mostly congregated in the cities. How was it possible for the rulers of the land to neglect all the town's folk, who, being artisans, mechanics, and tradesmen, ministered to their daily needs? No matter what the legal state of things may have been, it is difficult, if not impossible, to believe that the Longobards—even had they wished it—could have had the power to prevent the continuance among Italians of some relics, if only *de facto et usu*, of Roman institutions and Roman jurisprudence. The old laws had created a vast number of civil obligations, entirely unknown, even by name, to the Longobards. Then as regards what took place in the time of the Byzantines, who were ruled, even in their own country, by Roman laws and Roman institutions, the total disappearance of the municipality during their domination is quite incompatible with its speedy re-appearance in Venice, Rome, and many South Italian cities, which had remained more or less subject to Constantinople. But it is needless at this point to begin discussing a question that will re-appear later on in a plainer and more urgent guise.

## CHAPTER IV

GREGORY I.—AGILULF ESPOUSES THEODELINDA AND  
PACIFIES THE KINGDOM—GREGORY I. MAKES  
PEACE WITH THE LONGOBARDS OF SPOLETO—  
AGILULF LAYS SIEGE TO ROME—DEPOSITION OF  
THE EMPEROR MAURICE ; ELECTION OF PHOCAS—  
DEATH OF GREGORY I. AND OF AGILULF—ST.  
COLUMBANUS

POPE PELAGIUS II. and King Authari both died in 590. Thus there was a simultaneous change in the head of the Church and the monarch of the Longobards ; and their successors, more especially the Pope, were men of the highest character. Gregory I., the new occupant of St. Peter's Chair, was born in Rome about 540 of a distinguished Senatorial family. His parents were such zealous Christians, that immediately after the birth of their son they both adopted the religious life. Their child became an earnest student of philosophy and letters, filled high offices of the State, and about the year 573, shortly after the Longobard invasion, was Prefect of Rome and President of the Senate. Soon, however, he too was seized with the religious passion, and began to devote his great fortune to the endowment of Benedictine cloisters in Sicily and elsewhere. He also transformed his family palace in Rome, on the Celian Hill, into a monastery of the same order, and afterwards withdrew



there himself and apparently took the vows—although the date is uncertain—in the year 575. Then, so the story runs, chancing one day to see in the market some beautiful, fair-haired English boys exposed for sale as slaves, he was moved to exclaim: “Angels, not Angles, these heathen should be called”; and straightway hurried from the city for the purpose of travelling to Britain and converting the inhabitants to Christianity. But the people of Rome forced the Pope to call him back to them, and on his return the Holy Father appointed him to the office of Deacon. Later on he was sent as Papal *Apocrisarius* (or Nuncio in modern phrase) to Constantinople, where the personal influence he acquired at the Imperial Court was efficiently employed for the good of the Roman Church. Returning to his own country, after some years in the East, he was made Secretary to the Pope, and later on was unanimously elected as his successor. It is said that Gregory did his utmost to escape the enormous responsibility of assuming the triple crown, inasmuch as the Papacy was in a very difficult position at that time; but he was forced to accept the dignity. Meanwhile Rome was being ravaged by the plague, so in order to implore the Heavenly assistance, Gregory ordered a solemn procession of the whole population, which was continued for three days. It was during this great ceremony that, according to the legend, Gregory beheld an angel on the summit of Hadrian’s Tomb, and saw him in the act of sheathing his sword to signify that the people’s prayers were granted and the pestilence at an end. In memory of this event, a bronze statue of the Archangel was placed on the summit of the great mausoleum, which then received the name of Castel St. Angelo. But the present statue on it only dates from 1740.

When the imperial sanction had arrived from

Constantinople, the new Pope was consecrated under the name of Gregory I. on the 3rd September, 590, and occupied St. Peter's Chair for fourteen years—that is, to March, 604. He possessed a dual nature, combining the qualities of a contemplative and enthusiastically religious spirit with those of an extremely energetic and practical man : two different and, seemingly, incompatible characters, which, nevertheless, are frequently found united in a single individual. This dual nature may be recognised even in the writings of Gregory I., some of which, as, for instance, the "Dialogues," "Homilies," and "Moral Essays" show his contemplative side ; while others have a strictly practical purpose, such as those prescribing rules for the liturgy. These rules were long observed ; and to this day Mass is generally performed according to the rules of Pope Gregory. The reform of sacred music is likewise owed to him, together with the foundation of choir schools for teaching the "plain song" known to us as the Gregorian chant. The fourteen books of his "Epistolæ" form an imperishable monument to his memory and a most valuable contribution to the history of his times. These Epistles teach us to appreciate the lofty character of the man who might be truly called the second founder of the Papacy ; while the writer's practical power, untiring energy, Christian charity, and fervent holiness are brilliantly displayed throughout their pages. They plainly show us why he became the first man of his age, and not only the leader of the Church, but of Italian policy and, to some extent, of the policy of all Europe. He had to manage the administration of the enormous patrimony with which the generosity of the faithful had already enriched the Church throughout Italy, including Sicily and Sardinia. It is impossible to fix the precise

value of the vast estates of the Church, but, according to some writers, they covered an extent of 1,800 square miles, and yielded an income of 7,500,000 Italian *lire*, i.e., £300,000. This enormous revenue was a strong weapon in the Pope's hand, and he used it, not only in the service of the Church, the clergy, and conventual establishments, but in far greater measure for the endowment of hospitals and the relief of the poor. His letters are full of the wisest administrative regulations, and show remarkable tenderness and concern for the welfare of the peasantry. Besides treating of financial and philanthropic subjects, he continually attacks the Longobards in these epistles; seeks to rouse the Italian people to resistance, to the defence of their cities, and sometimes even summons the clergy to fly to arms. And all these manifestations of Gregory's fervid, energetic and youthful zeal occurred in the midst of a world that seemed tottering to ruin on all sides, a world he unceasingly struggled to save, spurred on by his steadfast belief in God and in virtue and by his ardent and inextinguishable enthusiasm for the welfare of mankind. "These are most wretched times," he wrote; "the country is ravaged and desolate, the cities are deserted, the Senate is dead, the people no longer exists, the few remaining survivors are threatened by the sword: we stand in the midst of a ruined world." Yet he was always dauntless, unbending, and full of courage. He showed unconquerable energy in asserting the dignity of the Roman Church in opposition to the Empire, and against the Patriarch of Constantinople, who presumed to usurp the title of Œcumenical Patriarch which solely appertained to the Pope himself as the Head of the Universal Church. But by way of contrast, as it were, he always clung to his earlier title of Servant of Servants, and persistently continued the struggle until victory was achieved.

His letters to the Empress are full of the noblest sayings in favour of the oppressed and in censure of the corrupt administration and excessive exactions of the fiscal authorities. Regarding the latter, he wrote as follows : " Rather than burden the poor with such heavy taxes, that in order to pay them, some are driven to sell their own children as slaves, send us less money for expenditure in Italy, and thus dry the tears of your suffering people." Equally constant and untiring were his efforts to win over the Longobards to the Catholic faith. He employed the services of their Queen Theodelinda, who was already a Catholic, to procure the conversion of her Arian husband, King Agilulf. He used the Archbishop Constantius, whom he had recommended to the Milanese, as a weapon against Arianism in Northern Italy. He did much to spread the diffusion of the orthodox creed among the Franks and even in Spain ; but his chief labours were directed to converting the Anglo-Saxons, to whom he sent his first missionaries in 596 and a second band in 601. He strengthened the unity of the Church by bringing all the bishops into subjection to Rome, and exercising great vigilance in their choice, in order to combat simony and prevent the election of unworthy men, which was a constant source of danger at that period. His encouragement of monasticism also served to augment the Papal power in Italy and elsewhere, inasmuch as the Papacy now began to wield a more direct influence on the religious orders by restricting that exercised by the bishops. At the same time he firmly enforced the rule forbidding youths under eighteen to take monastic vows, or any married man, unless the latter's wife should also adopt the religious life.

In all things Gregory proved himself superior to other

men. On one occasion he reprimanded the Bishop of Terracina for having forcibly expelled the Jews from the places where they celebrated their religious rites, sternly saying that dissenters from the true faith should be won over to Christianity by gentleness and persuasion rather than violence.

In the same year that Gregory I. became Pope the Longobards proceeded to elect a new king. As the chiefs justly appreciated the merits of their widowed Queen Theodelinda, they prayed her to take a second husband fitted to rule the country, adding that, trusting to the excellence of her judgment, they would accept any man she chose as their king. Theodelinda, who had already assumed the reins of government, and quickly shown her political acumen by endeavouring to form an alliance with the Franks, now held counsel with her advisers (*consilium cum prudentibus*) and selected Agilulf, Duke of Turin, a Thuringian by birth, a kinsman of Authari and a handsome, sagacious, valiant youth. Her choice once decided, she frankly went to seek him near Turin. Meeting him at Lumello, she invited him to drink from her own wine cup, after which *cum rubore subridens* she allowed him to kiss her lips and thus declared her purpose. The marriage was celebrated amid general rejoicing, and in May, 591, Agilulf assumed the royal authority and was solemnly proclaimed by the assembled people at Milan.

Agilulf soon found that he had accepted a very difficult position. The Franks threatened him on one side, the Byzantines on the other, while the Pope just elected in Rome was a strenuous opponent of foreigners and Arians, and had great power over the Italian people. If these three enemies should actually conclude an agreement, the Longobards would be driven to flight across the Alps. Fortunately, however, the foes were not in concert, nor was it possible for them to come to terms.



The Pope was dissatisfied with the Byzantines and the Italian people openly disgusted with them. The Franks were continually paralysed by sanguinary civil wars, although whenever these ceased for a while they were easily persuaded to join the Byzantines in attacking the Longobards. But since they as well as the Byzantines desired exclusive possession of Italy, whenever they were on the point of crushing the Longobards fresh discord broke out between them, and each of the two allies tried to side with the common foe to the other's hurt. Thus a sort of temporary balance of power was formed which gave Agilulf some chance of securing the safety of his kingdom. Only, there were internal troubles to be dealt with in addition to dangers from abroad. Some of the Dukes, feeling defrauded of their hopes of ascending the throne, were now on the verge of rebellion. Many others, and especially the very powerful border magnates, were thirsting for more independent power, and therefore also on the eve of revolt.

Agilulf, however, held his course so cautiously and shrewdly amid all these serious complications, that he not only preserved his throne, but, as Ranke justly remarks, became the real founder of the Longobard kingdom. First of all he carried out Theodelinda's wise plan and succeeded in concluding a treaty with the Franks, of which the exact terms are unknown to us. But we do know that there was peace between the two nations for a considerable time. Nevertheless the whole merit of this agreement must not be attributed to Agilulf alone. King Childebert, who had united Austrasia and Burgundy under his own rule, died in 596, leaving two infant sons to share his kingdom between them, so that Neustria was now a separate State. Thus before long the Franks were once more plunged in civil war, and the Longobard King took advantage of it to arrange a peace with them that left

him free to devote himself to the task of subduing the rebel Dukes, and settling the affairs of his kingdom before beginning a vigorous attack on the Byzantines.

First of all, he marched against Mimulf, Duke of the Isle of St. Julian, on the Lake of Orta, defeated him in battle, and put him to death. He then attacked Gaidulf, the very powerful Duke of Bergamo, and after routing his force made peace with him; later on, however, while fighting with Duke Ulfari of Treviso, Gaidulf again rose to arms against his king. But as soon as Agilulf had worsted Ulfari and cast him into prison, he went in pursuit of the treacherous Gaidulf, who had withdrawn to an island fortress on the Lake of Como (*Insula Comacina*). After capturing the isle and carrying off the treasures stored in it, Agilulf pursued the fugitive Duke to Bergamo, again defeated him and took him prisoner. Every one expected to see him put to death, but Agilulf, being a true statesman, controlled his wrath and spared the rebel's life; for he recognised the danger of exciting the enmity of this great magnate's powerful clan. Next, he turned his attention to Benevento, in order to enforce the authority of the Crown in that too independent Duchy. Its Duke, Zotto, had just died, and in the usual course of things one of his kinsmen would have been chosen to succeed him; but Agilulf, in order to prevent the Duchy from becoming a totally independent and hereditary State, appointed Arichis, a Longobard noble of Friuli, as the late Duke's successor.

The Dukedom of Spoleto, though smaller than that of Benevento, was of great importance owing to its geographical position. Being situated on the Flaminian Way running from Rome to Rimini, whence another road formed a line of communication with Ravenna, Spoleto stood between Rome and the Pentapolis, and was a continual menace to the Eternal City.

In fact, just about this time Pope Gregory complained bitterly to the Emperor regarding the conduct of the Exarch Romanus, who, although a brave soldier, left him exposed to hostile attacks, without stirring a step in his defence, so that he (the Pope) had to provide for every emergency unaided. He therefore implored the Emperor to finally assume the defence of the Italian cause (*causa Italiae*). "I no longer know," Gregory added, "whether I now fill the office of a shepherd or of a temporal prince. I have to provide for the defence of the city, to arrange every detail; I have to be paymaster to the soldiery." In fact, it was the Pope who repaired the walls and planned the defence; he was the leading spirit of the war both within and without the gates of Rome; it was he who warned the captains of the militia to keep a vigilant watch on the movements of the Spoleto troops. He sent soldiers to several cities with letters bidding them defend the walls under the command of the *Magister Militum* (27th September, 591). With another epistle of about the same date, addressed to the *Clero, ordini et plebi consistenti Nepæ*, he sent the *clarissimum Leontium* to defend the town of Nepi. In June, 592, he sent written instructions regarding the conduct of the war to two Masters of the Soldiery, in the tone of a superior officer addressing his subalterns. During the same year, on learning that the unarmed city of Naples was threatened by a concerted attack from Benevento and Spoleto, Gregory despatched there the "Magnificent Tribune" Constantius with orders that he should be put in command of the soldiery to organise the defence of the city. Meanwhile, without receiving any succour either in men or money from the Exarch, Gregory had to prepare to resist Duke Ariulf of Spoleto, who was advancing to lay siege to Rome. The Pope wrote to the Bishop of Ravenna saying:—"The regular troops stationed here have deserted the city

because their pay was in arrears, while the other soldiers can be barely persuaded to guard the walls. There is nothing to be done save to make peace with the Longobards. For Rome, it is now a question of life or death."

Assuming, accordingly, the sole responsibility, almost as though he were the lawful head and legitimate representative of the Roman Dukedom, he concluded a peace with Ariulf.

The Exarch was furious at this, and accused the Pope of unlawfully exercising sovereign power, as though independent of the Emperor. Henceforth, he declared, Ariulf, being safe from attack in the rear, could at any time march on Ravenna in junction with Agilulf. But, in the autumn of 592, the Exarch assembled the forces that he had hitherto feigned to be unable to gather, and advanced towards Central Italy, capturing Perugia, Todi, Orte, and Sutri, which were all in Longobard hands. Accordingly, whether willingly or unwillingly, the Pope was obliged to favour this war, in spite of having made peace with the foe. Thus his pact with the Longobards was broken; and in May, 593, Agilulf marched in person upon Rome. After crossing the Po, he despatched some of his Italian prisoners to Gaul to be sold as slaves; others whom he had mutilated, escaped to Rome. Thereupon the Pope was obliged to announce solemnly to the people that he must suspend his course of sermons on Ezekiel in order to attend to the war.

"No one can blame us," he said, "if we cease from preaching in the midst of all these tribulations, when we are surrounded by foemen's swords. Some of our Italians have come back to us deprived of their hands; others have been seized, chained, and sold as slaves; others again slaughtered!" Meanwhile Agilulf had already recaptured Perugia and killed the Duke Maurice, who, after formerly holding that city for the Longobards,

had betrayed it to the Byzantines, and had held it for them. King Agilulf then proceeded to invest Rome, and although the incidents of this siege are very imperfectly known, it would appear that, owing to the resistance the citizens were nerved to make by the Pope, to the outbreak of malarious fever in the Campagna during the heats, and partly also to the still unquelled revolt of the Dukes in Upper Italy, Agilulf was finally compelled to withdraw to the north, where he reduced in turn every rebel to subjection.

In the midst of all these events the Pope had become the leading personage in Italy, for he represented the interests of the nation, and its whole history seemed to be centred in this man, the giant of his age, who raised the Papacy to unexpected grandeur, and faced every danger with truly marvellous courage. It was impossible for him to be at peace with the Longobards, who were rapacious foreign barbarians of the Arian creed and enemies of all that was Roman. Neither could he be in agreement with the Byzantines on account of the perpetual religious strife with Constantinople and the continual efforts of that Court to keep the Church in subjection to the Empire. The Patriarch Joannes obstinately retained the title of Œcumenical Patriarch, and the Emperor had issued a new edict prohibiting all holders of administrative posts from accepting ecclesiastical appointments or taking monastic vows. The Pope energetically protested against this decree. Then, too, the persistent tendency to independent action shown by the priesthood of Ravenna was now encouraged by the Exarch Romanus, of whom Gregory wrote that "he behaved worse than the Longobards: thus the enemies who slay us seem more merciful than the representatives of the Republic who, although bound to protect us, gradually destroy us, on the contrary, by their malignity and rapine." Accordingly, he tried every means of in-



fluencing the Emperor and the Exarch ; employed the Archbishop of Milan for that purpose, and even had recourse to Queen Theodelinda. As a matter of fact, he could not desire that either Byzantines or Longobards should attain complete victory or predominance. Therefore he would have preferred them to come to an agreement whereby a balance of power might be established that would emancipate the Church from their tyrannous claims.

Agilulf, being also involved in a tangle of difficulties, seemed disposed, for his part, to make amicable terms with the Pope ; but the latter, warned by the result of his agreement with Ariulf, now shrank from the risk of provoking a fresh crisis. Hence he suffered increasing distress of mind, and frequently complained in his letters that with this perpetual anxiety he could neither find time to read nor write. *Tantis tribulationibus premor, ut mihi neque legere, neque per epistolas multa loqui liceat.* Worse still, he was assailed by calumnious charges of every description, and even accused before the Emperor of having murdered a bishop. Then his patience gave way, and he wrote as follows :—" Had I wished to commit bloody deeds, by this time the Longobard nation would have neither kings, dukes, nor counts, and be reduced to utter confusion. But I fear God, and shrink from staining my hands with any man's blood." The Emperor had likewise charged him with incapacity and presumption in his dealings with the Longobards. So, in his letter of the 5th June, 595, the Pope indignantly asked : " What means this ? My peace with Ariulf was broken by your withdrawing your troops and leaving me alone to face Agilulf. I have been forced to see Romans captured, chained up like dogs, and sent off to France to be sold into bondage. The Emperor should have only looked to the facts, and never lent belief to the

words of my foes." He appealed to Jesus Christ as witness to the truth of his assertion. Meanwhile, the Longobards of Spoleto and Benevento were continually extending their raids in Southern Italy, pillaging and conquering wherever they appeared; and as the people received neither aid nor encouragement from anyone excepting the Pope, his importance and authority were greatly enhanced, and he was recognised by the whole population as their true and legitimate head.

In 595, the general aspect of affairs was somewhat altered by the death of Joannes, the Patriarch of Constantinople, the main cause of all the strife in the Church. Ciriacus, his successor, proved more acceptable to the Pope. Soon after this event Romanus the Exarch also died, and was succeeded by *Kallinicus* (a name corrupted into *Gallinicus*), who was likewise much more favourable to Gregory. These changes would have greatly facilitated negotiations for a general peace with the Longobards but for unexpected obstacles raised by the Dukes of Benevento and Spoleto, who, desirous of retaining their independence of action, would only sign the treaty under certain special conditions which they presumed to impose. Accordingly, all that could be done in 599 was to patch up a two months' truce instead of a genuine peace. And, as Pope Gregory had already foreseen when he said "a peace will be made that will bring no peace," this truce was broken before the time fixed for its expiration, and could not be renewed. In 601, the Exarch was the first to begin hostilities, but Agilulf promptly retorted by attempting to set fire to Padua, which he afterwards captured and destroyed. The Avars were his auxiliaries in this war, and he added to their force a band of Italian artizans, members, probably, of the ancient *scholæ*, or trade guilds for ship-building work, *ad faciendas naves*. The general confusion was heightened by the fact that while the Avars attacked the

Empire on one side and devastated Istria, the Longobards of Spoleto on the other had several encounters with the Imperial forces of Ravenna.

But the most important and remarkable change took place at Constantinople, where the Emperor Maurice had become extremely unpopular owing to the severe discipline he enforced in the army. In the year 600 the Avars offered to let him ransom the 12,000 prisoners they had taken, and put them all to death when he firmly declined to pay for their release. This niggardliness roused much dissatisfaction among his subjects. Some years later, when he ordered the troops to pass the Danube and take up winter quarters across the river, the discontent of the soldiery rose to so high a pitch that a revolution broke out and Phocas was proclaimed emperor. This man was a monster of cruelty, and soon displayed his real character. In November, 602, he had his predecessor put to death, after causing the latter's children to be slaughtered before his eyes. Then, however, his attention being claimed by the Persian war, he decided to make peace with the Avars, recalled the Exarch who had provoked an outburst of hostility even in Italy, sent Smaragdus back there in his place, and published a decree recognising the Papal supremacy. Thereupon Gregory wrote him a letter of congratulation in which, after expressing all good wishes for his prosperity, he went on to say that "the very angels of Heaven would sing hymns of praise to the Lord" for the election of the new emperor. This missive has always been an indelible stain on the great Pope's career, for although Phocas undoubtedly helped to promote the triumph of the Church—the one supreme aim to which Gregory the Great invariably sacrificed all else—yet the Pope cannot be pardoned for expressing his joy at the accession of such a monster of iniquity. It should be remembered,

however, that the official language of the period was extremely inflated, especially in the East, and revelled in high-sounding phrases. Also, it has never been precisely ascertained if the Pope had been fully informed, before writing that letter, of the Emperor's cruel slaughter of innocents.

As we have previously observed, even Agilulf was brought under the influence of the Pope's iron will by the agency of his high-souled, Catholic wife, Queen Theodelinda, whose reputation survived her and who erected several celebrated public buildings in Monza and elsewhere. A fresh proof of the Papal influence was seen at Easter-time in 603, when Agilulf caused his baby son Adalwald (born about the end of 602) to be baptized a Catholic. Some writers maintain that the King himself was likewise converted; but we only know for certain that he showed great favour to the Catholics. Besides, the general conversion of the Longobards, resulting from Gregory's zeal and the Queen's powerful help, was already in progress. But these changes neither deterred Agilulf from pursuing his conquests, nor the Pope from becoming increasingly hostile to him in political matters. After gaining possession of Monselice, the Longobard monarch pushed on towards Ravenna; and it seems to be certain that, on this occasion, the Pope tried hard to induce the Pisans to come to the Exarch's assistance. There is a passage in one of his letters in which he says that no confidence can be placed in the Pisans, inasmuch as they had already prepared their fastest galleys (*dromoni*) in order to push out to sea and only employ them for their own profit. So apparently the Pisans were already organised in the guise of an independent municipality, with the power of deciding for themselves whether it suited them to take part in a war. However this may be, Agilulf, again assisted by the Avars, stormed and destroyed

Cremona, took Mantua, demolished its walls, and pursued the same course with other towns until Smaragdus agreed to a peace that was to last from September, 603, to April, 605.

By this time Gregory's health was much weakened by the infirmities of age; although, judging from his letters, his prodigious mental activity must have gone on increasing to the very last. He never desisted from urging all to give help to wretched Italy (*misera Italia*), and continually laboured for her good amid physical sufferings of every kind. In 600, he wrote saying that: "For eleven months the gout has only allowed me to leave my bed once in a while. My life is such that death will come to me as a blessing." Then, in another epistle, he says: "The pain sometimes diminishes, but never ceases entirely; still it has not yet managed to kill me!" One of his last letters was written in January, 604, shortly before his death, to order the despatch of clothes and warm coverings to a very needy bishop who was suffering from the cold, and whom he earnestly recommended to the benevolence of his colleagues. Gregory died soon afterwards, on the 11th of March, and was buried in St. Peter's.

In the same year (604), King Agilulf being anxious to prevent any dispute as to the succession, caused his son Adalwald to be proclaimed at Milan as heir to the Crown, though only aged two years at the time. The ceremony took place in the presence of the Longobard chiefs and of the Ambassador of the Frankish King, Theudibert, whose daughter was then betrothed to the juvenile heir of the Longobard throne as a token of perpetual peace and friendship between the two nations.

In 605, peace was concluded with the Exarch, and was afterwards renewed for a longer term, until 612. Meanwhile Phocas had been succeeded by Heraclius (610-41),



who was quickly absorbed in the Persian war. Also Smaragdus, who had twice filled the post of Exarch, was succeeded in that office by a certain Joannes, towards the year 611.

Italy now seemed assured of a period of tranquillity, but, precisely at that moment, the Longobards' former allies, the Avars, made a fierce attack on Gisulf, Duke of Friuli, who, after vigorously resisting the invaders, was killed in battle with the greater part of his men, leaving a widowed wife, named Romilda, and eight children. Thereupon Romilda, her children, and other survivors, mainly composed of aged folk, women, and infants, took refuge within the walls of Forum Julii (Cividale in Friuli). Four of Gisulf's orphaned progeny were girls, the other four, boys, but only two of these, Taso and Caco, were adults; the others being very young. The city was speedily besieged by the Avars, under the command of their Chagan. The legend runs that this Avar chief being a young and handsome man, Romilda fell in love with him at first sight, and infatuated by her passion, offered to open the gates to him if he would make her his wife. The Chagan promised to do so, entered the city, plundered and burnt it, and seizing all the wretched inhabitants, divided them among his tribe. As regarded Romilda, after doing his will with her, he passed her on to his officers, and subsequently caused her to be impaled, declaring that such was the only marriage deserved by so treacherous a woman. Meanwhile her three elder sons leapt on their horses in order to escape by flight. But first of all they determined to kill their younger brother Grimwald to save him from falling into the enemy's hands. But the child cried to the one who had already drawn his sword: "Pray spare me, for I too can stick on a horse;" and springing into the saddle, he followed his brethren.

But he could not ride fast enough, so was overtaken and captured by one of the Avars. But the latter had not the heart to kill this beautiful, fair child with lint-white hair, and merely seized his bridle in order to lead him to the camp. Suddenly, however, the lad drew his little sword and slashed so vigorously at his captor's head that the man fell to the ground and left him free to gallop after his brothers. Meanwhile Gisulf's daughters had remained in the enemy's power, and in order to preserve their honour adopted the expedient of hiding bits of rotten meat on their persons so that the stench of it prevented the Avars from approaching them. This fantastic story contains, however, a core of truth, *i.e.*, that the Avars invaded Istria, wasted Friuli, killed Duke Gisulf, captured Cividale, and then withdrew because Agilulf was advancing against them. The elder sons, Taso and Caco, were enabled to assume the government of Friuli, but ultimately perished by treason; while the other couple, being too young to reign, took refuge with Duke Arichis of Benevento, who was by birth a Friulense and a kinsman of their own. Indeed, Arichis had formerly lived with them as their preceptor, and now welcomed them to his home and treated them as his own children.

In 615 or 616, Agilulf died at Milan, after reigning for twenty-five years, and, as we have seen, after having settled the succession on his son Adalwald, who was now aged twelve. Accordingly, the boy's mother Theodelinda virtually ruled the country, continued to labour ardently in diffusing the Catholic faith and also in promoting culture, particularly architecture, among the Longobards. Thus the way was smoothed for their complete fusion with the Romans. She made generous donations to the churches, many of which were built by her order, including the famous Basilica of San Giovanni at

Monza adjoining the palace that owed its erection to Theodoric. Theodelinda not only restored and enlarged this palace, but adorned it with frescoes, which enabled Paulus Diaconus to give us a detailed description of the Longobard attire. Later on a real treasure hoard was collected in the Basilica, including three specially valuable and interesting crowns. One of these, studded with precious stones and with sculptured figures of Christ and the apostles, bore an inscription to the effect that it was the offering of Agilulf, *Rex totius Italiæ*; the which inclines us to believe that it dates from a later period, as there is no reason to suppose that Agilulf ever assumed that title. Napoleon transported this crown to Paris, where it was stolen and lost for good. The second crown, likewise of later date, is of slight interest. The third, on the contrary, is the highly celebrated Iron Crown, and has gained that name because within the chased golden circlet, enamelled with fruits, flowers, and twenty-two jewels, chiefly emeralds and pearls, there is a thin hoop of iron, said to be formed of one of the nails used to fasten Jesus Christ to the cross. Legend declares that Agilulf wore this crown at his coronation, and undoubtedly it was long used by later kings of Italy.

A notable incident of Agilulf's and Theodelinda's reign was their protection of St. Columbanus, who played so distinguished a part in the history of the Church and of human culture. This Saint was born about 543, in Ireland, where Christianity had been received with the most impassioned enthusiasm. Thanks to Irish cloisters the Christian cult progressed at a truly marvellous rate, and became diffused throughout Europe. Moved by his fervour for proselytism, St. Columbanus went to settle in France, but was soon expelled for having sternly censured the conduct of the sovereigns of that land, who, although Catholics, were ferociously cruel. But he found

a quiet refuge at Bregenz, on the Lake of Constance. After a short time, he moved farther on towards the south, leaving behind as his representative in Switzerland one of his Irish disciples, St. Gallus, from whom both the Canton he inhabited and the celebrated Abbey of St. Gall derived their name. St. Columbanus arrived in Italy about 613, and although he continued to write against the Arians, was heartily welcomed by Agilulf and Theodelinda. He founded the monastery of Bobbio, together with the famous collection of MSS. now scattered over the Vatican, Ambrosian and Turin libraries, which proves with what loving devotion the founder and his followers promoted the study of classic lore. From the manner in which Agilulf protected this Saint, and allowed him to convert his two sons to Catholicism, from the generous donations he bestowed on Catholic churches, and from his invariable kindness to Catholic bishops, formerly much persecuted by the Longobards, we are disposed to think that Paulus Diaconus had good ground for his belief that the King also accepted the Catholic faith. Nevertheless, most historians are opposed to this idea, and maintain that his conduct may be chiefly attributed to his Longobard lukewarmness, or rather indifference concerning religion, to Theodelinda's powerful influence over him, and to the effect of Pope Gregory's all-masterful will.

## CHAPTER V

ROTHARI, KING OF THE LOMBARDS—THE EMPEROR  
HERACLIUS—THE PERSIAN WAR—MAHOMET—THE  
“ECTHESIS”—ROTHARI’S EDICT

ITALY was now to pass through a double crisis. Two great men, Agilulf and Pope Gregory I., had disappeared from the world’s stage. The already-begun conversion of the Longobards had sown discord among the people, and speedily caused a rebellion that drove their youthful King, the Catholic Adalwald, from the throne, and compelled him to seek safety in Ravenna. He was succeeded by the Arian Ariwald in 625. Very little is known of this king, although he reigned for several years; and nothing is recorded of Theodelinda’s thoughts and deeds during that period. Possibly, she remained a passive spectator of the changed course of things. Her life ended in 628, and Ariwald, who had taken her daughter Gundeberga to wife, died about the year 636. As in Theodelinda’s case, the widowed Queen was empowered to choose a second husband who was to be made king, and proved equally fortunate in her choice. For the king she raised to the throne was the lawgiver of the Longobard nation.

Meanwhile, the Empire being reduced to sore straits by the Persian war, which had now assumed formidable proportions, the central government was not only unable to send aid to Ravenna, but was continually changing the Exarchs there to prevent them from aspiring to



independent power. In fact, Smaragdus had been replaced by Joannes, whose real name—according to some writers—was that of *Lemigius Thrax* (611-16), and who was succeeded by a certain Euleterius (616-20), who attempted to rule the Exarchate in his own name. Thereupon, his soldiers revolted, slew him and sent his head to Constantinople, whence they soon received a new Exarch in return.

Meanwhile, Italy naturally felt the effects of the very critical state of things in the Empire. The Emperor Phocas, whose cruel reign had been disturbed by a series of conspiracies, and in whose honour Smaragdus erected the famous column in the Roman Forum, had breathed his last on the 5th October, 610. His successor, Heraclius (610-41) was a true Oriental, subject to alternations of exaggerated activity and extraordinary indolence. In fact, during the first ten years after his accession to the throne, he seemed to be a careless spectator of the rapid advance of the Persians and their allies the Avars. Nevertheless, the danger was really pressing, seeing that the Persians occupied Syria, entered Damascus, pushed on into Palestine, captured Jerusalem itself, with all the holy places (614-15), and even carried off the sacred timbers of the Cross. After this they advanced into Egypt and threatened to move further on. None could foresee where the Empire's disasters would stop. The very city of Constantinople seemed threatened by the foe, yet even then Heraclius remained motionless, as though he were paralysed with terror. At one time (618) there seems to have been some idea of transferring the capital to Carthage, in the hope of finding it a better point of defence for the Empire.

But at this moment everything suddenly changed. The threatened loss of the capital roused the political, religious, and public spirit of Constantinople. Even

Heraclius finally awoke from his lethargy and realised that he had to conduct a great war and fight in defence of the faith as well as the Empire, in order to free Jerusalem and the holy relics from the profane hands of Fire-worshippers. He seemed a new man at that time. After concluding in 620 a two years' truce with the Avars, he prepared for war with feverish haste. In 622 he set out at the head of his army, and like a new Belisarius won a series of victories over the Persians in 622-25, driving them to withdraw to the shores of the Black Sea, where they established their winter quarters. Then their Prince, Chosroes, prepared for a desperate effort, and concluded a pact with the Bulgarians, Slaves, and Avars. The latter, with the Chagan at their head, made a fierce onslaught on Constantinople, while the Persians simultaneously attacked Heraclius with equal fury. But the people, priesthood, and soldiery of Constantinople defended the walls with desperate valour, and must have won a signal victory, since there is no further mention of Avar attacks. It seems that Heraclius had already decided to get rid of that tribe, and therefore showed more favour to the Slaves. Certainly, from that moment the Avars gradually disappeared almost entirely from history, whereas the far more numerous Slave tribes now pushed to the front, occupying first the Balkan peninsula and then spreading over other regions towards Central Europe. Heraclius pursued his victories, until the often defeated and humiliated Chosroes was deposed and killed by his rebellious people in 628. His son succeeded him on the Persian throne, made peace with the Empire, gave up all the territories his father had won, released all the prisoners of war, and restored the beams of the Holy Cross. So Heraclius re-entered Constantinople in triumph, and the following year carried back the precious relics to the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem.

Of all the wars waged during the prolonged struggle with Persia, this campaign led by Heraclius was certainly the most successful, and seemed also decisive. Nevertheless it threw a stronger light on the inherent weakness of the Eastern Empire, which, although imbued with the Greek spirit, pursued a Roman policy, and comprised a medley of heterogeneous provinces. The rapid advance of the Persians at the outset of the war had plainly shown the lack of cohesion between the different provinces. Many of them having never assimilated with the Empire, were easily detached from it. A great war had been required for their re-conquest, and accordingly other regions better amalgamated with the Empire and of more vital importance to it had been left undefended and exposed to the invasions of other barbaric tribes. A similar experience had occurred in the days of the Emperor Justinian, who in his wars for the recovery of Africa, Italy, and Spain, had neglected the defence of Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece, which were consequently overrun by Bulgarians, Avars, and Slavonian tribes. The same fact, only on a larger scale, was repeated under Heraclius. For although the Avars had disappeared from the stage, the Slavonians, hitherto only acting as their allies and fellow-combatants, now flooded the Balkan peninsula and poured into Greece, Dalmatia, Istria, and Carniola. The respective fate of these two tribes, the Finnish Avars and the far more numerous Indo-European Slaves, much resembles that of the Huns and the Germans. The former, likewise of Finnish origin, began by disputing and overriding the power of the latter, who, subsequently combining with the Romans, succeeded in routing and driving them away, whereupon the Huns almost entirely disappeared. In the same way the Avars, who at first seemed to dominate the Slaves, were subsequently absorbed and assimilated by the latter. Certainly, no mention is made of them for a

long period, but they reappeared in Charlemagne's time and were totally defeated by him. Almost all these Turanian Finnish races rush upon the scene with the irresistible fury of hurricanes. But although nothing can check their first advance, they find great difficulty in establishing a permanent footing, and soon breaking up, scatter and vanish with the speed with which they had previously gathered together. The Ungari, known as Magyars and Hungarians, however, afterwards form a notable exception to the above-mentioned rule. They came to Europe at a much later date, and even at the present day are still, as it were, a strong, compact island in the midst of Aryan races.

At any rate, it is certain that neither Justinian's campaigns nor the victories of Heraclius achieved any lasting effect, seeing that the provinces they reconquered were abandoned altogether in the end. During the seventh and eighth centuries the efforts of the Empire were devoted to regaining and preserving those which had been best assimilated and were most homogeneous. The process of disintegration that Heraclius had so triumphantly arrested was resumed before the close of his reign. And the fact of its repetition showed that it was of no transitory nature.

In those days precursory symptoms had already appeared of an important politico-religious event, destined to create deep disturbance both in the East and the West.

In 628, Mahomet the Arabian began to diffuse his new doctrine by word of mouth and force of arms. It was a Monotheistic doctrine, that avoided all subtle theories and philosophic disputes concerning the Trinity or the dual nature of Jesus Christ, whom Mahomet regarded as his own predecessor. The theological questions by which the Greek mind was so stirred and inflamed were nowise adapted to the wits of the people in other parts of the Empire. Besides, the new religion recognised no distinc-

tion between different classes of society, inasmuch as Mahomet proclaimed that all men were equal, "even as the teeth of a comb;" promising an eternal paradise in the next world, with every sensual delight to those who fought and gave their lives for the faith; while he inculcated a fatalism that made men indifferent to the danger of death. It is undoubted that the religious exaltation of the Arabs and Saracens (the latter name was applied by the Byzantines to all who professed the Mussulman creed) soon rose to an extraordinary pitch. After Mahomet's decease in 632, the Arab tribes, warlike by nature, trained in the desert to a perpetually militant life, and led by the Califs who succeeded the Prophet, rapidly passed from conquest to conquest, and regained all the territories which the Persians had occupied until expelled from them by Heraclius. In 635, they captured Antioch; in 637, Jerusalem; Mesopotamia in 638; and Egypt between 639 and 640. The Emperor Heraclius had apparently relapsed into his former apathy, and after making a feeble and inefficient resistance, died in 641, when the Empire had lost for ever all its possessions beyond the Taurus.

Conversion to the Mussulman faith had heralded and paved the way for the Mussulman conquest, and both were facilitated by the character of the Eastern people. Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Armenia had always opposed the doctrines of the Council of Chalcedon regarding the Trinity and the dual nature of Christ. As we have already seen, they had constantly inclined to the Monophysitic creed which solely recognised the divinity of Jesus Christ, in which, they maintained, His human nature was totally absorbed. This refusal to acknowledge the dual nature of the Saviour disposed them to favour the Mussulman Monotheism which rejected as useless all controversy on the Trinity; hence they were easily



converted to the new faith. Thereupon religious dissension quickly changed into political conflict because the Mussulman converts called the Arabs to help them against the Empire. Heraclius had foreseen that the new religion would be a source of danger, and had tried to check its progress. Enlisting the aid of the Patriarch Sergius, he declared himself in favour of the Monothelite doctrine, which, although admitting the dual nature of Christ, declares Him to have only one will. By this species of compromise, for which he hoped to obtain the sanction of Rome, he endeavoured to conciliate the Monophysites so as to prevent their separation from the Empire. Pope Honorius would seem to have abetted the scheme, since he pronounced the controversy as to the Saviour's single or dual will to be an idle grammatical dispute. Nevertheless, the spirit of the Catholic Church, always most intolerant of compromises of this kind, was more opposed than ever to allowing religious disputes to be decided by the Emperor, and especially so when his decision was inspired by political motives. Encouraged by the attitude of the Pope, Heraclius published in 638 his *Ecthesis*, a declaration of faith prohibiting all further discussion on the dual will of Jesus Christ, seeing that His two natures could have only one will. This decree, however, raised such a storm of opposition in Italy that even Pope Honorius might have been forced to condemn the *Ecthesis* had he not died before it reached Rome.

Thus the old discord between Rome and Constantinople was flaming anew, and became more fiercely heated when the Exarch Isaac came to the Eternal City and carried off the Lateran treasure under the pretext that it was required for the soldiers' pay, since no supplies came from Constantinople. When the new Pope Severinus was chosen in 640 it was resolved not to sanction his election

unless he accepted the *Ecthesis*; but the Emperor was soon obliged to acknowledge that the election was valid, although Severinus proclaimed his firm adherence to the Chalcedon doctrine. This Pope, however, only reigned a few months, and was succeeded, in the same year, by John IV., who promptly convoked a Council, which absolutely condemned the Monothelite doctrine, though not only omitting to mention Pope Honorius, whom the Church naturally sought to shield, but also without any reference to the Emperor Heraclius or the Patriarch Sergius. Nevertheless, the Monothelite dispute went on for another hundred years, and so the *Ecthesis* had only served to increase discord by adding a new schism to those already in existence, even as the *Henotikon* controversy had done in the past.

Undoubtedly, therefore, at the death of Heraclius in 641, the Empire, exposed to more and more violent attacks from the Mussulmans, and increasingly divided by theological quarrels, was in a state of the utmost confusion. Hence King Rothari had nothing to fear from the East. But there was no lack of civil discord even among the Longobards, who were in a period of transition, now that so many of them had been converted to the Catholic faith. The Brescian Duke Rothari had been raised to the throne by his marriage with Gundeberga, the widow of King Ariwald, who died in 636, but as he was an Arian and his queen a Catholic they cannot have enjoyed much domestic peace. For the division between the two creeds was so marked that, according to Paulus Diaconus, some towns possessed both an Arian and a Catholic bishop. The new king inaugurated his reign by killing many nobles who were opposed to him. He also behaved very harshly to his Catholic wife and kept her imprisoned for five years in his palace at Pavia. Whether religious differences or other motives

led to this cruelty is unknown. The unlucky woman was finally released by the intercession of Clodovic II., king of the Franks, and devoted the rest of her life to religion and charity, and restored the Basilica of St. John at Pavia, in which she was afterwards interred.

Notwithstanding the disturbed state of his own kingdom, Rothari feared no molestation from the Empire, which was increasingly shaken by Mussulman attacks, and accordingly turned his safety in that direction to account by extending his dominions in Lunigiana and pushing on through Liguria to the Frankish border towards Marseilles. He then proceeded to attack the Byzantines near Oderzo, and in a pitched battle on the banks of the Panaro routed them so thoroughly that, according to Paulus Diaconus, 8,000 of the army they had gathered from Ravenna and Rome perished in the field.

The same year (641) witnessed the death of Arichis, the Duke of Benevento, a sturdy warrior who by force of arms had won fresh territories in Samnium, Campania, Apulia, Lucania, and Bruttii. It may have been at this time that Salerno was also annexed. Thus the northern borders of the Duchy of Benevento marched with those of Spoleto, and the States of the Church comprised nearly the whole of Southern Italy and acquired increased independence. As previously noted, the Duke had given shelter to Rodwald and Grimwald, the two elder sons of his kinsman Gisulf, when they escaped from the massacre perpetrated by the Avars in Friuli. It was the dying wish of Duke Arichis that one of these young men should succeed to his dukedom in preference to his own son Aio, who seemed half imbecile, in consequence, it was said, of a poisoned draught administered to him by the Exarch. Nevertheless, Aio succeeded his father, but was soon killed (641) in an encounter with the Slavonians,

who made a descent on Sipontum from Dalmatia. Rodwald avenged his death by slaying most of the pirates and driving the rest across the sea. He then became Duke of Benevento, but died in 647, and was succeeded by Grimwald, who retained the ducal power to the year 662. Both the brothers were valiant captains, but we have few particulars of Rodwald's brief career. We do not even know whether he attended the great assembly at Pavia in 643, where King Rothari's celebrated Edict was formally confirmed; and it is also unknown whether the said Edict was then enforced in the Duchy of Benevento as well. But of Grimwald's after career we shall have much to say later on.

The Edict of 643 is decidedly the most notable event of Rothari's reign, which ended in 652. It is a most important historic monument and constitutes an act of truly independent sovereignty. For the first time a barbarian had dared to legislate for Italy without regard to the Empire and without any reference—at least so far as he knew—to Roman law. As King Rothari states in the introduction to his Code, he had merely caused all the usages already observed by his people to be collected and written down, and had endeavoured to complete and amend them by excising superfluous matter. This we have done “by the advice and consent of the First Lords (*Primates*), our Judges, and of all our most faithful army.” These judges and *Primates* were the *Gasindi*, dukes, and *Gastaldi* who acted as military leaders in war and as judges in times of peace; while, according to barbarian custom, the army consisted of the Longobard people in arms. The custom of taking counsel with the chieftains and the people on all affairs of public importance was of old origin among all Germanic races, as even Tacitus had learnt. This custom, however, had lost its primitive significance, and, owing to the exceptional

social conditions of the Longobards and their thoroughly military organisation, had been consequently reduced to little more than a matter of form. The *Primates* no longer discussed affairs; they merely proffered opinions or advice, while the people had only to express their approval.

King Rothari's Edict or Code is certainly one of the best compilations of barbarian laws. This may be attributed to the fact that the other barbarian tribes put their laws and usages in writing shortly after being annexed to the Empire, whereas the Longobards wrote theirs at a much later date. Yet, although unaware of it themselves, the indirect influence of Roman law can be traced in these Longobard laws, and is shown not only by the Latin tongue in which they are indited, but by the use of some completely Justinianic phrases, by the somewhat systematic order according to which the laws are arranged, and by certain provisions that cannot possibly be of Germanic origin. The Edict consists of 388 chapters, the last twelve of which appear to have been added at a later date.<sup>1</sup>

It deals first of all with offences against the State, and personages of the State; next with the laws of inheritance, degrees of kindred, and the division of property; but it scarcely alluded to political rights.

There has been much dispute as to whether this Code was only enforced among the Longobards or among the Romans as well. Barbarian laws in general had a racial character; that is, they belonged exclusively to the people by whom they were written, and who transported them

<sup>1</sup> Others were added by Grimwald in 668, and many more by Liutprand, who, between the years 713 and 735, published 153 laws, which had been passed by fifteen Assemblies, gathered together from Austria, Neustria (i.e., the eastern and western provinces of the kingdom), and Tuscia. Certain other chapters were promulgated by Rachis and by Astolf, the last of the law-giving Longobard kings. (*Vide* Bluhme, in the "Monumenta Germanica.")



wheresoever they went. But the laws of the Longobards, as likewise of certain other races, also bore a territorial character, inasmuch as they applied to all tribes who had entered Italy in company with the Longobards. Some writers consider this proved by the fact that the Saxons were driven from the country because they wished to live in pursuance of their own laws and institutions. In the preface to his Edict, King Rothari declares that he has compiled it for the promotion of justice, for love of his subjects, and without drawing any distinction between them. These words would seem to indicate that the Longobard law held good for Romans as well as for his own people ; which, as we know, is a much-contested point. One or two clauses of the Edict undoubtedly hint at the existence of other legal systems differing from that of the Longobards ; and, indeed, had the Roman law been entirely abolished, it seems incredible that so important a fact should have been passed over without being definitely recorded. Nor is it conceivable that the Longobards could be able, no matter how willing, to annihilate a system that had been rooted in the country for ages, establishing among the conquered Italians a number of legal obligations, many of which were so completely unknown to the conquerors that their laws neither made nor were able to make any provision for them. Besides, once taken for granted the absolute destruction of Roman law in Longobard Italy, it would be impossible to understand how that law came to be in vigour there at a later period, when no allusion can be found in documents and chronicles to its disappearance and revival.

It seems to us that the most probable conclusion to be drawn is, that although the Roman jurisprudence was not officially recognised, it practically survived by force of custom in many private contracts of old standing in Italy.

At all events, even admitting that the persistence of Roman law can be merely inferred from Rothari's Edict,<sup>1</sup> it stands forth as a normal fact, in the later code of King Liutprand. For we find in this code the following clause :—"If a Longobard, having children, becomes a priest, his children will continue to live under the same law under which their father lived before he was a priest." This not only implies the existence of another law, but likewise that even the Longobard who became a priest was subject to that law. And what other law could there be excepting the Roman law? Was not canon-law, which undoubtedly existed, full of the elements of Roman law, and, therefore, did it not help to promote that rapid development of the latter which was so markedly apparent at the time? The Longobard legislation is essentially barbaric, but shows from the first how the influence of a higher civilisation is brought to bear upon it through the medium of Christianity and Roman jurisprudence. Rothari himself, while professing to compile and amend national customs, declares the absurdity of recurring to the barbarian custom of single combat for the purpose of settling legal disputes, and seeks to check that practice, just as he seeks to promote amicable compromise for the purpose of checking the barbarian blood-feud (*faida*). In certain cases he condemns the killing of witches, as being opposed to humanity and Christian principles. Then, Liutprand openly declares that he attaches little value to the so-called judgments of God. It is certain that the more deeply we dip into Longobard law, more hidden elements of Roman jurisprudence are revealed. Accordingly, the great Savigny's theory in favour of the persistence

<sup>1</sup> No woman living according to the law of the Longobards can be *selpmundia*. Therefore, some women did not live according to the law of the Longobards.

of Roman law gains renewed strength, for although he sometimes pushes it to exaggeration, it is certainly correct in the main. Moreover, the existence throughout the Middle Ages of schools of grammar and Roman law at Ravenna, Rome, and elsewhere is increasingly demonstrated.

Of course, Longobard law is a substantially Germanic product, and this fundamental character is constantly shown, although in certain details it may appear somewhat modified by the special conditions under which it was formulated. Above all, it is the legal system of an armed people, but also of an agricultural people living scattered about the country in separate dwellings, and with fields enclosed by hedges. Rothari declares that he compiles his Code for the good of his own subjects, and "particularly with regard to the incessant tribulations of the poor, for the protection of the weak, whom we know to have suffered violence, from useless exactions." As some writers have maintained, this declaration may be partly attributed to the influence of Christianity; but partly also to the fact that, generally speaking, the barbarians were chiefly hostile to the great landowners who oppressed the lower classes; so they despoiled and slaughtered the former, and often aided the latter, who had nothing worth stealing. At any rate, they were gentler to the poor than the Byzantines had been; nor is there any proof that they burdened them as they burdened the wealthy either in town or country.

Besides, the Longobard law is, above all, the barbaric law of a warlike and conquering people; and of its nature is intrinsically and essentially opposed to the genuine spirit of Roman law. For, instead of being ruled by a juridical conception of the State, its dominating idea is that of force.

The family, as the primary nucleus and basis of a

society where the authority of the Government is still very weak, is strongly constituted for self-defence, but seems to have no legal connection with the State, and to be only held together, on the contrary, by primitive ties of blood. Woman, as the weaker sex, is subjected to a perpetual tutelage, called *Mundio*, from which she is never emancipated. She can never be her own guardian (*Selbmundia*). Now, according to the Roman law, the tutelage to which woman is subjected is mainly determined by family interests ; the property has to be kept together, and therefore the patrimony must not be divided. But the Longobard woman passes from the (*Mundio*) guardianship of her father to that of her husband. On the death of the latter she is subject to the guardianship of his relatives, and in some cases of her own brothers or sons. Should all these fail, she is in the charge of the *Curtis Regia*, inasmuch as, being unfit to carry arms, she must be always under tutelage of some kind. The males take nearly the whole of the patrimony, leaving the woman, if unmarried, only a small share. The Longobard family was not, like the Roman, a species of absolute monarchy wherein the father, particularly during the Republic, exercised unlimited power ; but even among the Longobards he had very great power. The married woman found some protection in the authority still maintained over her by her own family and the father's power over the son had limits unrecognised by the Roman law. When the son became capable of bearing arms, he could separate from his own family, and become the head of another. It is a known fact that barbarian legislation in general ignored the system of dowry, but the Longobard wife was allowed to possess property that came to her from her husband. The latter was bound to free her from the tutelage of her father or brothers, and to pay the price of it ; he was likewise bound to accord her the

*Meta*, which may be called a species of dowry, and also the "morning gift" (*morgengab*). The father owed her nothing except the *faderfium*, which was a gift consisting of as much or as little as he pleased. The Germanic institution of collective property had almost died out among the Longobards, only some faint trace of it having survived here and there. We also note that in early times the Longobards made no testamentary dispositions, and when this practice was subsequently adopted by them under the influence of Roman law, a will began to be considered as binding as a donation. The opposition between this Germanic legislation of the Longobards and Roman jurisprudence is still more clearly apparent as regards penal law. Capital punishment, which was rarely applied, is, according to the Edict, to be inflicted, first of all, on any one guilty of attempting the life of the King, whose person was held sacred. "The heart of the King is in God's hand." Secondly, on the adulterous woman, whom the husband is also entitled to kill; on the woman who murders her husband; on the slave who murders his master; on any man who deserts to the enemy, rebels against the monarch or the Dukes, or incites soldiers to rebellion. All the rest of the Longobard penal laws consist of a series of pecuniary compensations graduated according to the offence and the social condition of the offender. But this punishment by fine was intended to provide for the blood-feud or private vengeance recognised by the law to be a family affair; not intended, as among the Romans, to satisfy justice and avenge the Republic. Herein lay the fundamental contrast that must have appeared to Romans as a monstrous and insupportable barbarism. The system of trial by ordeal, or *sacramentum*, was founded on the so-called judgment of God, and the *sacramentales*, or sworn witnesses, who helped to diminish trials by combat. The *guidrigild*, or



price of blood, was the fine levied for the murder of a man or woman, and was originally paid to the family of the victim, but afterwards shared between them and the King. The fact of no *guidrigild* being fixed in Rothari's Code for the murder of a Roman gave rise to the idea that the Longobards attributed no value to the life of a Roman, and that, consequently, he was their slave. But, as we have already shown, no one believes now that the Romans were enslaved, nor that their life was considered of no account, for no one dares to draw such weighty inferences from the silence of the Longobard law on those points. Accordingly, the old theory no longer merits discussion.

## CHAPTER VI

KING GRIMWALD — CONFLICT AND CONCLUSION OF  
PEACE BETWEEN THE POPE AND THE EMPEROR  
CONSTANS II. IN ITALY—DEATH OF GRIMWALD  
—BERCTARID (OR PERCTARIT) AND GODEPERT—  
CONVERSION OF THE LONGOBARDS TO CATHO-  
LICISM—LIUTPRAND

KING ROTHARI died in 652, and was succeeded by his son, who speedily came to a violent end. Rodwald's brother-in-law, Aripert, then ascended the throne (653-61). He was the son of the Bavarian Prince Gundobald, who had escorted his sister Theodelinda to Italy, and was subsequently created Duke of Asti. Hardly anything is known of Aripert's reign, and after his death a very obscure period ensued, interwoven with so many confused legends that it is hard to trace any authentic thread of history through the tangled web.

Aripert left his kingdom to be shared between his two sons, Perctarit and Godepert, a method frequently followed by other barbarians, particularly by the Franks, but quite strange to the Longobards, whose kingdom was already too much divided into duchies. Nor was it less strange to see that the eldest brother had his capital at Milan, the second at Pavia. Thus they were not only near neighbours, but the youngest-born possessed the more important residence of the two, for Pavia had been always the

capital of the kingdom. Naturally enough the brethren were soon at war with each other. So Godebert sent Garibald, the Duke of Turin, to Grimwald, the Duke of Benevento, offering him the hand of his own sister if he would come to Pavia as his ally against Perctarit. Thereupon Grimwald, the same prince who escaped from the slaughter in Friuli, and a man of great daring, left the State of Benevento in the charge of his own son, and immediately marched northwards with a small army, which grew in number by the way. But, according to the somewhat legendary narrative, on reaching Pavia, instead of assisting Godebert, he killed him so suddenly that the King's son had barely time to fly for his life. On hearing of these events, Perctarit fled and sought refuge among the Avars in such haste that he left his wife and his son Cunibert behind, whereupon Grimwald seized both and sent them as prisoners to Benevento. Then Grimwald married Godebert's sister, whose hand was to have been his reward for succouring the man he had now dethroned and killed. The Duke of Turin, who had been an accomplice in the treacherous deed, was a kinsman of the betrayed Godebert; nevertheless, Grimwald was acclaimed King of the Longobards at Pavia in 662. This was an event of great importance, inasmuch as he still retained the Dukedom of Benevento, where his son ruled in his name. Thus, for the first, and indeed the only time, nearly the whole of Italy was united under a Longobard king, a state of things that, had it lasted, might have produced most serious results. In fact, the Pope quickly felt its effect, finding himself caught, as it were, in a ring of iron, surrounded on all sides by the Longobards. This spurred him to a hasty reconciliation with the Emperor, with whom he had been hitherto in fierce disaccord.

We have already alluded to the Monothelite con-

troversy, which had raged more hotly since the issue of the *Ecthesis*, and the Exarch's seizure of the Lateran treasure-hoard in 640. Afterwards came the publication of the *Type*, in which the Emperor Constans II. (642-68) threatened very severe penalties on all persons who should continue the dispute touching the dual will of Jesus Christ. But Pope Martin I. (649-53), having great strength of character, assembled the Lateran Council of 649, which was attended by 202 bishops, who condemned the "*most iniquitous Ecthesis*" of Heraclius, and "*the most abominable Type*" of Constans. It was the first time that a Pope dared to pronounce a sentence of this kind on imperial edicts; therefore the Exarch Olympius was directed to seize the person of Martin I., and despatch him a prisoner to Constantinople. As the legend runs, the Exarch had given orders that the Pope should be slain while celebrating Mass; but the assassin charged to do the deed was struck blind at the moment fixed for the crime.

But, just then, the rapid advance of the Mussulmans in the Caucasus, Syria, and Egypt, towards the interior of Africa, and lastly in Sicily, compelled Olympius to hasten to attack them in that island, which, owing to the smallness of their force, they quickly evacuated at his approach. At the same time fresh dissensions broke out between the Emperor Constans and the Pope, and accordingly the new Exarch Theodore *Calliopas*, who entered Rome with his army in June, 653, was instructed to seize the Pontiff's person. On reaching the Lateran, he found the Pope stretched on a couch in the Basilica, near the high altar. The people wished to drive off the soldiers by force, but Martin forbade the attempt, insisting that no blood should be shed in his cause. So he meekly surrendered, and was transported to Constantinople, where he was half-starved, tortured, and then, with

an iron collar round his neck, dragged to the terrace where malefactors were pilloried. Nevertheless, he firmly refused to recant. Finally, the Byzantines banished him to the Crimea, where he died in September, 655, and was made a Saint by the Church. The Abbot Maximus, a steadfast champion of the theory of the dual will, had his right hand chopped off and his tongue torn out.

Yet it was under the immediate successors of this cruelly-persecuted Pope Martin, *i.e.*, during the reigns of Eugenius I. (654-57) and Vitalian I. (657-72), that the Papacy succeeded in negotiating and concluding a political agreement with the Emperor without yielding a jot on the religious question.

This success was partly owed to the continual and threatening attacks of the Mussulmans, who in 655, at a place known as *Alle Colonne*, near *Phœnix* on the Lycian coast, fought a decisive naval battle with the Emperor Constans, utterly routed him and put him to flight. In addition to this event, which struck terror into all Christendom, the augmented power of the Longobards, and the religious strife lacerating Italy, served to increase the general alarm. In *Aquileia* the old controversy of the Three Chapters was raging anew, although the Popes had done their utmost to abate it. In *Milan*, the Church was plainly showing her resolve to assert the same independence that was claimed by *Ravenna*, which had long raised pretensions to that effect, and where the Archbishop *Maurus* was actually assuming a right to the title of Patriarch.

In consequence of all this, Pope and Emperor put aside their dissensions for a time and joined hands. In 662, Constans left Constantinople to lead his army to Italy, where no one could divine the real nature of his intentions. Some thought that he meant to transfer the seat of government to Sicily and make that island the



centre of the Empire, as being easier to defend against the Mussulmans ; while others held that he was coming to put a check on the Longobards' power. In that case the expedition was not badly timed. In fact, the Emperor had started from Constantinople the same year in which Grimwald was proclaimed King of the Longobards. Disembarking at Taranto in 663, and gaining reinforcements on the road, he quickly marched on Benevento at the very time when, owing to the fierce warfare raging in Northern Italy, it was difficult for Grimwald to send reinforcements to his son, Duke Romwald. Nevertheless, at the first sign of the approaching storm, the young Duke dispatched his foster-father, Seswald, to Pavia to inform the King of his danger. Thereupon, disregarding the risk of leaving his newly-conquered realm, which was seething with disaffection, Grimwald hurried to his son's help without a moment's delay. He undauntedly pushed on in spite of the numerous desertions which occurred by the way, and menacing rumours that he would never return to Pavia again. Seswald had been sent forward to advise Romwald that succour was at hand, but was captured by Constans, who brought him before the walls of Benevento, and by threats and violence tried to compel him to inform Romwald that his father could not possibly come to his aid. But the instant the young Duke appeared on the battlements, Seswald boldly cried : " Be of good cheer ! Grimwald comes ; he will reach the river Sangro this night ! " Then, foreseeing the doom that awaited him, he recommended his wife and family to his master's care. In fact, the Emperor speedily put him to death and caused his severed head to be shot from a catapult into the city, where it was received by the Duke with kisses and tears. Constans now withdrew, leaving 20,000 men to continue the siege ; but the united forces

of Romwald and the King soon defeated and drove them away.

The Emperor next proceeded to Rome (July 5, 663), was welcomed by the Pope six miles outside the gates, visited the churches and made donations to them; but on leaving the city carried away many precious bronzes, including the gilded roof of the Pantheon. Thence, by Naples and Calabria, he made his way back to Sicily and oppressed the country so cruelly for several years that he was suffocated in his bath in 668. His son Constantine Pogonatus succeeded him on the throne (668-85).

Meanwhile, Grimwald was engaged in reducing his kingdom to order. Leaving his son to rule the Duchy of Benevento, he married one of his daughters to the Count of Capua, who had been his ally in the war against the Emperor, and appointed him Duke of Spoleto. On returning to Pavia, he turned his arms against all the chiefs who had deserted or betrayed him. Naturally, his most formidable foe was Perctarit, the ex-King of Milan, who, having found refuge with the Avars, gathered all the rebels to him. Grimwald vainly attempted to induce the Avars to give up the fugitive. Thereupon Perctarit took a daring resolve, and sent his trusted follower, Unulf, to inform the King that, feeling assured of his good faith, he would willingly come to him of his own accord. He did so, and Grimwald gave him a friendly welcome to his palace. But so many chiefs came to seek Perctarit, that suspicion grew from day to day, hence at last the King decided to slay his guest. But, warned of the design, Perctarit contrived to make his escape with the aid of his faithful Unulf. Grimwald next turned his attention to Lupus, Duke of Friuli, another of the lords who had revolted during the wars, and, accordingly, loosed the Avars upon him, who speedily defeated his troops and put him to death. After com-

pleting several other acts of vengeance, he made a friendly alliance with the Franks in 671, and died shortly after. He was a strong, valorous, daring man, and would seem to have been converted to the Catholic faith. In 668, he had added several new chapters to Rothari's Code. He was undoubtedly successful in war, but was no statesman, and had no settled policy. When the Emperor Constans withdrew from Sicily, Grimwald should have grasped the opportunity to complete the conquest of Southern Italy by seizing Naples and Rome, whereby his power in Northern Italy also would have been greatly increased. Instead of doing this, he immediately returned to the north, and wasted his time in petty revenge and skirmishing campaigns. Thus the country was again plunged in strife and disorder, and at Grimwald's death Italy was once more divided. His eldest son, Romwald, retained the Duchy of Benevento; the second son, Garibald, ruled at Pavia under the regency of his mother, the sister of Perctarit. The latter had taken refuge in France, but now returned to Italy, was immediately acclaimed King of the Longobards, and Garibald was heard of no more. Perctarit occupied the throne for seventeen years, and being also a fervent Catholic, erected numerous churches and convents, thus greatly promoting the general conversion of the Longobards. But the important changes introduced by the new creed led to continual strife.

The most notable event of this reign was the rebellion of Alachis, Duke of Trent, a strong opponent of the clergy, whom Perctarit, on the contrary, zealously befriended. But the latter, after reducing the Duke to submission, treated him with clemency, although foreseeing that his kindness might be abused and lead to serious disasters for his line. In fact, when Perctarit died in 688 and his son Cunibert succeeded to the throne,

Alachis again rose in open revolt and successfully usurped the crown.

Before long, however, his violent tyranny, hatred of the clergy, and perfidious conduct provoked a rebellion in Cunibert's favour, so the kingdom was split in two parties and torn by the struggle between the rival claimants to the crown, until meeting in a battle near the river Adda, the strife was brought to an end by the defeat and death of the rebel Alachis.

During this period the social conditions of the Longobards underwent a remarkable transformation. The progress of Catholicism promoted civilisation and gradually welded conquerors and conquered into an united people, that now seemed to flourish with renewed life. This is shown even from the very terms used by Paulus Diaconus in his description of the struggle between Alachis and Cunibert, which gives a first hint of the importance of the Italian cities. For he relates how Alachis, when passing through Piacenza and the eastern part of the kingdom, tried both by violence and suavity to gain the friendship and alliance of the various cities, (*singulas civitates*) there (v. 39). On reaching Vicenza, Alachis was attacked by the citizens; but after he had defeated them, they too became his partners (*socii*, v. 39). These and other terms, hitherto absent from the chronicler's pages, would incline us to believe that he had now realised the novel importance to which Italian cities had risen. At all events, we know for certain that Cunibert continued to reign down to the year 700, that he was always most friendly to the clergy, and that the seeds of culture were now seen to bud for the first time at the Court of Pavia.

But disorder returned after his death, inasmuch as the succession of his youthful son, Liutbert, who was under the guardianship of the faithful warrior Ansprand, was

disputed by Ragimbert, Duke of Turin and cousin to the King. This pretender seized the throne, which soon passed to his son, Aribert II. (701-12).

The new monarch's first campaign was directed against Ansprand, who was completely defeated and forced to fly for his life to Bavaria. Thereupon Aribert wreaked his vengeance on Ansprand's wife and family by blinding them, and depriving them of their ears and tongues. But he allowed one of the children, an infant, named Liutprand, to escape to his father unhurt, thinking him too young to be dangerous. This boy, however, was destined to become the most illustrious of the Longobard kings. In fact, at the moment when Aribert's power seemed most firmly established, and when, in spite of his cruelty, he had gained the support of the priesthood by his zeal for religion, donations to churches, and the restoration to the Pope, or, as it was expressed, to St. Peter, of certain territory in the Cottian Alps, formerly appropriated by the Longobards, the day of chastisement came. Ansprand descended into Italy with an army he had collected in Bavaria; and after opposing a feeble resistance, Aribert's courage failed, and he determined to seek safety with the Franks. So, hurrying to Pavia, he snatched as much gold as he could carry on his person, and took flight at full speed. But in attempting to swim across the Ticino, he was dragged under and drowned by the weight of his treasure. Ansprand then ascended the Longobard throne, and dying shortly afterwards (June 13, 712), bequeathed it to his son, Liutprand.

Thus ended the lengthy period of confusion, strife, and almost anarchy endured by the Longobard kingdom during its conversion to the Catholic faith.



## CHAPTER VII

### RAVENNA AND OTHER CITIES OF THE EXARCHATE RISE IN REVOLT AGAINST THE EMPIRE—THE EMPEROR PHILIPPICUS—REBELLION IN ROME

BUT however great the disorder of Longobard Italy during this time, Byzantine Italy was in no better case, although there it was chiefly owing to the religious strife raging at Constantinople, and the consequent disagreements which arose between the Pope and the Emperor Justinian II. (685-95 and 705-11). In 691, the Emperor arbitrarily convoked a Council that was called the Domed Council (*Concilium in Trullo*), from the circumstance of its meetings being held in a domed hall of the Imperial Palace. By some writers, however, it is styled the Quinisextan Council, since, to avoid disputes with Rome, it was declared to be no new Council, but merely a sequel to the fifth and the sixth, since it solely touched on points of discipline, not of dogma. Nevertheless, the convocation of any Council by sole command of the Emperor constituted an act of religious independence that no Pope could possibly tolerate. The new canons prescribed, though only concerning discipline, differed from those of the Roman discipline; accordingly, the new Council was stigmatised as "erratic" by the Catholics, and Pope Sergius (687-701) refused to subscribe to its decisions. This enraged the Emperor to so high a pitch that

he dispatched his Protospathary, Zacharias, to take the Pope prisoner. But the soldiery of Ravenna and the Pentapolis rushed to Rome to fight in his defence ; while the Roman army, which had been formed by that time, seems to have looked on without striking a blow. Consequently the rebellious militia quickly mastered the city, and the Protospathary only saved his skin by concealing himself under the Pontiff's bed. Emboldened by the turn affairs had taken, Sergius appeared on the balcony, addressed the people and exhorted them to be quiet ; but the mob refused to disperse until Zacharias had been ignominiously driven from Rome.

These incidents occurred in 693-94, and Justinian II. had no means of revenging them, since there was much disaffection in Constantinople at the time ; before long, in fact, a revolution broke out that banished him from the throne for many years (696-705). But even this change failed to put a stop to the Byzantines' quarrel with Rome. John VI. (701-705) had succeeded Sergius in the Papal Chair, when the new Exarch, Theophylactus, advanced threateningly against him ; whereupon, to use the words of the Pontifical Book, the "*Militia totius Italiæ*"<sup>1</sup> rushed tumultuously to Rome, where the Pope had some trouble to calm them. But just at this time another revolution in Constantinople restored Justinian II. to the throne, and being of cruel and bloodthirsty temper, he instantly resolved to take revenge on his enemies in Italy as well as on those in the East. A new Pope, Constantine (708-15), now reigned in Rome, and his election was soon followed by the arrival at Ravenna of a fleet commanded by the Patrician, Theodorus. Its appearance was greeted with joy, its leader welcomed with due state. But, suddenly, the principal nobles and priests were seized, fettered, and carried off to the ships ; while a

<sup>1</sup> "*Liber Pontificalis*," i. 383 of the Duchesne edition.

large force of Byzantines landed, and after sacking and burning Ravenna, dealt harsh and summary punishment on the rebels. As noted above, many of the leading citizens of Ravenna had been seized, and these were all put to death by order of the Emperor. Among others, there was a certain Joannitius, a man of much repute, as the holder of high offices of the State, and for the depth of his classical learning. Another captive, Felix, the Archbishop of Ravenna, was first blinded, according to the Byzantine custom, and then banished to the Crimea. Thus the Emperor took revenge on the rebels who had dared to humiliate his representatives in Rome. And as the Archbishop, like many of his predecessors, had always tried to assert his independence of Rome, the Pope regarded him with hostility, and allowed the Emperor to do his will on him without a word of protest. On the contrary, when summoned to Constantinople in 710, he promptly obeyed the call, and on joining Justinian in Asia Minor, apparently came to friendly terms with him; and after being pompously entertained both in the East and the West, re-entered Rome on the 14th October, 711.

Nevertheless, the general agitation in Italy had by no means calmed down, but, on the contrary, was increasing from day to day. The atrocities perpetrated at Ravenna had aroused great irritation in all the Byzantine cities, especially in those of the Exarchate. Agnellus of Ravenna, after describing the athletic games, sanguinary struggles and proud temper of his fellow-citizens, tells us how the Emperor, still thirsting for revenge, sent a new Exarch, named Joannes Rizocopus. This officer, appearing in Rome after the Pope had gone to the East, instantly seized some dignitaries of the Church and had them beheaded, whereupon another violent rebellion burst out in the Exarchate, and Rizocopus was put to death soon after his arrival at Ravenna. The people had risen in

arms, and George, the son of the murdered Joannitius, had been chosen as their chief. George divided the citizens in twelve armed companies, one of which was composed of priests and their dependents, an arrangement that was still maintained in Ravenna a hundred years later. The leader also harangued the people in language that reminds us of the orations of Cola di Rienzo. The cities of Sarsina, Cervia, Cesena, Forlimpopoli, Forlì, Faenza, Imola, and Bologna joined Ravenna in rebelling against the Empire, so that nearly the whole of the Exarchate was in open revolt.<sup>1</sup> This was the first instance of a confederation of Italian cities, the first time that the individuality of those cities was brought to light. It is true that the fact is only recorded in the pages of Agnellus of Ravenna, a high-flown writer of the ninth century, who gives no further particulars of that important event, and even leaves us uncertain whether it took place in 710 or 711. But Paulus Diaconus had already furnished some hints of the growing importance of the Italian cities, and even noted the precursory signs of this formidable revolt, which was to be speedily renewed in another shape.

Justinian's revenge was now checked for ever by a fresh revolution at Constantinople, in which both he and his son were put to death and Philippicus was raised to the imperial throne. This new Emperor (711-13) seemed disposed to conciliate the Pope, for he not only released the Archbishop who had been so cruelly blinded, and who, on returning to Ravenna, immediately made an act of submission to Rome, but likewise sent there the head of Justinian II., a gift welcomed by the Ravennese with fierce exultation. Nevertheless, there was soon hotter discord than ever between the Pope and the Empire, for Philippicus being a Monothelite, insisted on calling an

<sup>1</sup> Agnello Ravennate, *vide* "Mon. Germaniæ Historica," i. 369-70.

Monothelite

assembly of Monothelite bishops, who annulled the decision of the Sixth Council. This roused a storm in Rome, where the verdict of the bishops was indignantly rejected. No portrait of the heretical Emperor was allowed to be placed in St. Peter's or in any other church, no mention of his name in the Mass; the people treated his edicts with scorn, and no coin stamped with his effigy was given currency. The Pontifical Book describing this new rebellion speaks for the first time of the Duchy of the City of Rome (*Ducatus Romanæ Urbis*), mentions also the Duke (*Dux*), and the share taken in the riot by the Roman people (*populus Romanus*). The nobility, army, and people were now united against the Emperor, tried to depose the Duke nominated by his predecessor, and appointed a certain noble named Peter to replace him. Violent riots ensued, for a portion of the people were hotly opposed to the scheme. Public disorder raged for nearly a year, until at last the Pope succeeded in quieting the mob, a task that was easily achieved, as the news had just come that the heretical Philippicus had been deposed and blinded.

The new Emperor, Athanasius II., having declared his adherence to the orthodox faith, appointed Scholasticus Exarch of Ravenna; while the Romans accepted Peter as their Duke, after he had sworn to abstain from wreaking vengeance on his opponents. Serious disorder prevailed in the East for several years longer, but on the 25th March, 717, Leo III. (the Iconoclast) was elected Emperor, and his reign marked the beginning of a new era in history.



## CHAPTER VIII

LIUTPRAND—GREGORY II. AND LEO III.—CONFLICT REGARDING IMAGE-WORSHIP—LIUTPRAND PROFITS BY THE OPPORTUNITY AND ATTACKS THE DUCHY OF ROME—THE POPE MAKES THE FIRST APPEAL TO THE FRANKS—OBTAINING NO HELP FROM THEM, HE TURNS AGAIN TO THE LONGOBARDS

THREE great personages now appear on the world's stage : Liutprand, the greatest of the Longobard kings, who came to the throne in 712 ; Pope Gregory II., who was elected in 715, and was not unworthy of the glorious name he bore ; lastly, Leo III., proclaimed Emperor in 717, whose famous Edict against image-worship in 726 roused the greatest agitation throughout the Empire.

The strong, valorous, keen-witted Liutprand, conqueror and law-giver, reigned for thirty-one years ; but, on first ascending the throne, had to crush various plots against his person and punish the traitors with death. His legislative achievements were next in importance to those of King Rothari, seeing that between the years 713 and 735 he published 153 laws in fifteen assemblies, "with the approval of the nobles, judges, and entire people," or, as he puts it elsewhere, "in concert with the illustrious *Optimates* and all the Longobard nobles." The influence of the Church and of canon law is plainly visible in these statutes ; indeed, Liutprand himself declares that he

wrote them by Divine inspiration, and in order to bring them nearer to the law of God, he sometimes adds *quia Papa per epistolas nos adhortavit*. The character of the first Catholic Longobard monarch is often shown very clearly in his laws, particularly in those regarding testamentary dispositions for the benefit of the soul, the recognition of marriage as a Divine institution, the privileges to be granted to the Church, and the injunction to beware of heretics. Then the influence of Roman jurisprudence is still traceable in some of his enactments as to wills and woman's rights of succession. Clearly apparent, too, is the law-giver's aversion from the so-called "judgments of God," and his increasing desire to protect the poor from the oppression of royal officials. But all such foreign influence notwithstanding, the Code of King Liutprand is thoroughly Longobard, with its national stamp left substantially intact.

The Emperor Leo III., as we have already remarked, caused much commotion in the world's affairs. First of all, he had to struggle against the Saracens, who advanced through Africa, invaded Spain and Provence, and threatened to assault Constantinople itself. After bravely battling with them by land and by sea, Leo succeeded in repulsing them, though with much difficulty and at no small risk. Also, at the beginning of his reign, he had to put down various revolts, the gravest of which was an insurrection in Sicily, where a new emperor was actually proclaimed in his stead. This rebellion was barely quelled before the conflict with the Image-worshippers broke out, causing fierce agitation both in the East and West, and fiercest of all in Italy, where the strife was heightened by the resolute attitude of Gregory II. For this dauntless Pope was not to be scared into submission, and had quickly provided for defence against Longobard attacks by fortifying the walls of Rome. Liutprand,

however, being a fervent Catholic, showed great respect to the Pope and confirmed the restitution already made by Aripert II. of the territory that had been wrested from the Church in the Cottian Alps. Another proof of the changed religion of the Longobards was afforded by them about 719, when they rebuilt the Monastery of Monte Cassino, which they had destroyed more than a hundred years before.

The War of the Images burst into flame with extraordinary speed, materials for the conflagration being already prepared. Unfortunately, the chronological sequence of events is involved in the deepest obscurity. Ecclesiastical writers have profited by this circumstance to justify the Pope's conduct in every respect, by even endeavouring to give a religious colour to certain measures taken by him, which were anterior to the struggle, and solely dictated by political motives. Thus the history of this period is very confused as regards its details. But it appears to be well-ascertained that, shortly before the strife began, Liutprand, taking advantage of the disordered state of the Empire, advanced upon Ravenna and took possession of Classis. Yet, as neither the causes nor consequences of this highly important capture have been put upon record, it remains an unexplained and isolated fact. About 717 or 718, Romwald II., Duke of Benevento, had seized the fortified city of Cumae, which dominated the last-remaining free line of communication between Naples and Rome. Feeling the imminence of the danger, the Pope sent gold and good advice to John I., Duke of Naples, who thereupon recaptured Cumae by sudden assault, after slaying 300 Longobards and securing 500 prisoners. We also find that before the struggle for the "Images" had begun, the Emperor had ordered the Exarch to impose fresh taxes in Italy without granting exemption to

ecclesiastical property, and, if necessary, by going to the length of confiscating Church treasure. These instructions may have been partly dictated by hostility to the Pope, but undoubtedly to a greater extent by the pressing need of supplies for pursuing the war against the Saracens. It is no less certain, however, that the Pope regarded the new tax as an intolerable insult, and instructed his dependents to refuse payment, thus giving an example that was widely followed and served to provoke revolt.

This affair moved the Exarch to such exceeding wrath that he started a fierce quarrel with the Pope, and presently a conspiracy against the latter's life was hatched in Rome, although whether at the instance of the Exarch himself or of men who hoped to win his favour by that means, is not positively established. It was rumoured that Marinus, the Duke of Rome, was the accomplice in the plot, and that Roman nobles, and even dignitaries of the Church, had no small share in it. Legend adds that the Duke was all at once miraculously stricken with paralysis, and being therefore obliged to leave Rome, the murderous scheme came to nought. Soon, however, the arrival in Italy of the new Exarch, Paulus, encouraged the conspirators to hope for success, but then the Roman people turned against them and fell on them with fury. The Cartulary Jordanes and the Sub-Deacon Joannes were killed outright, and a Duke named Basilius was forced to become a monk. Thereupon the Exarch Paul, being moved to increased wrath, dispatched an army to Rome to depose the Pope and take him prisoner. But the Romans flew to arms, and being also assisted by the Longobards from Spoleto and Benevento, held the bridge on the River Anio and repulsed the Exarch's soldiery. According to certain writers these events preceded the War of the Images, but others, on the contrary, maintain that they were merely episodes of

that war. It is highly probable that they were rather political harbingers of the coming religious struggle, and by thus preparing the ground for it, increased its fury.

There is no doubt that the Emperor must have been deeply enraged by the Pope's opposition in Italy, at a moment when such serious danger in the East was menacing, not only his throne, but the whole Christian world. For the same reason, ecclesiastical writers have a tendency to assign all these incidents to a later date, and by presenting them as episodes of the religious struggle, make them serve as a complete justification of the course pursued by the Pope.

However this may be, Leo III.'s famous edict against the worship of images was only issued in 726. The iconoclastic doctrine was closely connected with the Monothelite and Monophysite disputes; it was likewise another result of the Eastern spirit that was invariably opposed to the West, and it was supported for political reasons. The rapid advance of the Saracens was prepared and promoted by the wide spread of Islamism, which, as we have previously noted, found favour with certain Eastern races and among those of North Africa, because it came to them in the shape of a simply monotheistic creed, untroubled by discussions on the Trinity or the dual nature of Jesus, and without any worship of the Saints. Whether purposely or not, the Emperor's edict afforded some satisfaction to the native tendencies of the Oriental mind, yet without straying a step from the Christian fold.

The image worship that was so congenial to the temper of all Southern races in the West, had its origin in paganism. The exaggeration to which it was carried in venerating, not only visible representations of God, of Jesus, of the Virgin, and the Saints, but even the sign of the Cross and relics of every kind, had been long con-



demned by the most influential Fathers of the Church. Nevertheless, this worship became an integral part of the Catholic religion, a cherished need for the natives of Italy. Hence the contention regarding it raged with the same violence that was afterwards displayed at the time of the Reformation. The Emperor decreed that all images should be removed from the churches and destroyed, and threatened the Pope with deposition unless he obeyed the edict. But the Pope unhesitatingly treated it as a declaration of war, by pronouncing the Imperial decree to be null and void. Next, the destruction of certain famous images reputed to work miracles raised the popular fury to the highest pitch. In Rome, Ravenna, the Pentapolis, and Istria, the people flew to arms and appointed dukes of their own choice. Even Venice soon revolted in favour of the Pope. At Ravenna there was a momentary risk of civil war, as the imperial party there was apparently supported by the Archbishop Joannes, who sought to profit by the turmoil for the purpose of establishing his own independence from Rome. But the Pope's adherents soon won the day even in Ravenna; the Archbishop was banished and the Exarch Paul was excommunicated and killed. In Rome, the Duke Peter, being suspected of connivance with Constantinople, was deprived of his sight. There is also mention of a certain Duke Exilaratus<sup>1</sup> in the Neapolitan region, who, having risen against the Pope, was slain in the Campagna by the Romans, together with his son. All this occurred about the year 726 or 727, and is another proof of the increasing autonomy of the Byzantine cities in Italy. In Rome, besides the Dukedom and the Duke, the Roman army (*Exercitus Romanus*) was gaining greater importance,

<sup>1</sup> He could not have been Duke of Naples, although that title was attributed to him, seeing that, as Schipa has noted, that Dukedom was then held by Theodorus, elected in 719.

and the nobles, who commanded it, were becoming the veritable rulers of the city.

Naturally enough, Liutprand tried to turn the general confusion to account, in order to seize a larger slice of Italy ; and, in fact, many cities of Æmilia and the Pentapolis surrendered to him without any resistance. He also took Sutri, which was only thirty miles from Rome ; but soon restored it to its owner, the Church, with whom he still wished to avoid open conflict. The Pope had realised by this time that he would be the chief sufferer from any increase of the Longobards' power. In fact, if they once became masters of all Italy, he would be merely the bishop and servant of their king, who, being so near a neighbour, would be therefore more inconvenient and oppressive than a distant emperor. In addition to all this, the Romans, with their growing thirst for independence, were bitterly opposed to the Longobards, who threatened to annihilate it. In truth, the Roman desire for independence was at the same time both an advantage and a danger to the Pope, as he could not remain without means of defence in the midst of an armed and often rebellious people. Therefore, everything considered, he must have wished to see the power of the Empire and the Longobards pretty equally balanced, since if either of them gained the mastery, that one could easily keep the Romans in check.

Accordingly, he presently set to work to put down the very insurrection he had provoked. So when the rebels proposed the election of a new emperor, he exerted his authority to crush the scheme, and exhorted the people to respect their legitimate sovereign, who, as he said, would probably return in the end to the true faith, without Italy being forced to break loose from the Empire whose aid was always indispensable to the welfare of the world.

This was an equivocal and involved attitude, and the

falseness of it became still more apparent in 727, when the new Exarch landed in Italy. Although at strife with the Emperor, the Pope had certainly done him a good turn by trying his best to pacify the rebels, but at the same time he was on good terms with Liutprand on account of the restitution of Sutri to the Church, and the Byzantines could not approve of any friendly relations with the barbarian king who was usurping possession of their own territory. Accordingly, the Exarch lost no opportunity of opposing the Pope, and even sent an envoy to organise a plot against him in Rome, but the scheme being discovered the people fell upon the man and sought to put him to death. On this occasion also the Pope was obliged to intervene to save the envoy's life. Thereupon the Exarch changed his plans, and entering into negotiations with Liutprand helped him to effect the subjection of the Dukes of Spoleto and Benevento (Thrasamund II. and Farwald), who thereupon swore allegiance and gave hostages to the King. Shortly after this, the united forces of the Exarch and the Longobards were threatening the walls of Rome. But Gregory II. was equal to the emergency, and relying on the might of his religious prestige, he marched in solemn procession from the gates to meet the King, and led him through the city to St. Peter's, where the Longobard, in token of submission, deposited his crown, sword, and mantle, at the foot of the altar. The ceremony ended, the Pope also concluded an amicable agreement with the Exarch. Both reconciliations, however, were purely ephemeral.

Gregory II. died on the 11th February, 731, and was succeeded by Gregory III. (731-41), who seemed disposed at first to favour the Emperor at the expense of the Longobards; but after convoking a Council (731), which condemned all iconoclasts to exclusion from the Church, a fresh rupture with Constantinople naturally ensued, and

the strife went on with increased fury. The Emperor now levied heavier taxes in Italy, and especially in Calabria and Sicily, where the Church possessed vast estates.<sup>1</sup> It was at this moment apparently that all the churches in those provinces were annexed to the Patriarchate of Constantinople and removed from the jurisdiction of Rome, an event that caused Southern Italy to become Hellenic for a long period.<sup>2</sup> But the severance of the churches was the last injury inflicted on Rome by Constantinople, for henceforth the Empire was increasingly engrossed in the struggle with the Saracens, and torn by internecine strife. Meanwhile the Pope was left to face the threatening Longobards, without a single ally.

This was a period of rapid transformation, of continual change, and therefore a desperately critical time, not only for the Papacy but for Italy at large. On the one hand, the menacing attitude of the Longobards was driving the Pope to unite with the Emperor; but, on the other, that sovereign was too far off and too deeply engrossed in nearer concerns to be able to afford any help; and even were he able to give it, the question of the images had destroyed all hope of coming to an agreement with him. This was the reason why the Popes, with unflinching political acumen and truly prophetic foresight, now began to turn their attention to the Franks. For that Northern

<sup>1</sup> The name of Calabria, originally applied to both Apulias and to the Territory of Otranto, was extended in the seventh century to the Province of Bruttii, which also appertained to the Duchy of Calabria, and derived its name from its, then, principal region. But when the Longobards had gradually conquered the whole of the territory known as Calabria, the Duchy was reduced to the single Province of Bruttii, which retained the name of Calabria in 727 and has kept it ever since. It was an old custom of the Byzantines to preserve the nomenclature and semblance of things of which the reality and substance had vanished. *Vide* Schipa, "Archivio Storico per le Provincie Napolitane," Anno xx., fasc. i., Naples, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Hodgkin, vi. 405; Bury ii. 446. It is strange that the Pope should not have raised a strong protest against this usurpation.

people had been converts to Catholicism for some time, their power was increasing, and they had become zealous champions of the Church and the orthodox creed. They were now fighting valiantly against the Saracens, who had poured into France from Africa and Spain; and, as we shall presently find, hurled them back over the Pyrenees. In appealing to the Franks, the Popes showed themselves inspired with a new conception of the world's policy, a policy that would secure their safety from the Longobards without leaving them at the mercy of the Byzantines, who always deserted them at critical moments in order to tyrannise over them when the danger had passed. Meanwhile all was disorder and confusion, everything was changing. Hence it was impossible to carry out any fixed and preconceived plan; all depended on chance, so it was best to await one's chance, and seize it when it came.

Ravenna was now held by the Longobards, but how and when they became its masters is not accurately known. There are certain letters of Gregory III. (attributed by some writers to his predecessor), written about the year 734, in which he directs Orso, the Doge of Venice, and Antoninus, the Patriarch of Grado, to assemble their Venetian troops, and set forth with the Exarch Eutychius (727-50), who had sought refuge with them, to recapture the capital of the Exarchate from the Longobards and restore it to the Empire. The Doge undertook the campaign, and led his forces to Ravenna by sea, while the Exarch marched them overland. The city was won, King Liutprand's nephew, Hildeprand, was captured; and the Duke Peredeus, of Vicenza, was killed. This expedition, although the particulars of it are involved in obscurity, serves to show us that Venice was already constituted as an almost independent State, and it also exemplifies the changeable and haphazard policy then pursued by Emperor,



Pope, and Longobards. Each of these three Powers wished to obtain predominance in Italy to the detriment of the rest; therefore each joined in turn with one of the others, but never for long, so that neither rival might have a chance of becoming inconveniently strong. When the Longobards seemed in the ascendant, the Pope drew closer to the Empire; but as fresh discord soon rose between them, he then turned again to Liutprand, who, as we have seen, quickly profited by the Papal favour to extend his power in Italy and reduce Spoleto and Benevento to subjection. Thereupon the Pontiff, finding himself caught as it were in an iron trap, and with his Romans on the point of revolt, again changed his course and assisted the Dukes in their combat with the King. Accordingly, the dealings of Rome with Spoleto and Benevento acquire real importance, inasmuch as they now constitute and decide the dominant characteristic of Italy's policy. Thrasimund of Spoleto, who, together with the Duke of Benevento, had shortly before made submission to Liutprand and left hostages in his hands, again rose to arms. Whereupon Liutprand pressed him hotly and forced him to fly to Rome. The King wished the Pope and the Romans to give up the fugitive; and as they refused to do this, he instantly marched over the border and seized four castles in the Duchy of Rome.

It was on this occasion that the Pope wrote the first letter that has come down to us of the series of missives he addressed to Charles Martel, the man who really consolidated the Carolingian dynasty of the Franks. In this letter the Pontiff asked his aid against the Longobards, who had dared to pillage even the Church of St. Peter, which at that period was outside the walls of Rome. The request came at a particularly unfortunate moment, for Charles Martel was then engaged in warring against the Saracens, and having applied to Liutprand for help, the Longobard

was marching to join him. But although Charles was unable, just then, to aid in defending the Church against Liutprand, he helped indirectly to keep him away from Rome. So the Pope instantly profited by the opportunity to assist Thrasimund to recover his State. Thus the Duke was able to return to Spoleto, and promised, although without keeping his word, to reconquer and restore to the Duchy of Rome the lands which had been unlawfully seized by the Longobard king. Meanwhile the latter, learning when he reached Northern Italy that the Frankish war with the Saracens was at an end, led his army back towards Ravenna, sacking all lands belonging to the Church. Then traversing the Pentapolis, he re-entered the Spoleto territory, and despite the vigorous resistance offered by the people, invaded the Roman Duchy (740), and pounced upon all the lands, flocks, and chattels belonging to the Church.

Then Gregory III. indited another letter to Charles Martel, requesting him to send envoys to Rome, to examine for themselves the real state of affairs, and imploring him not to forsake the Church on account of his friendship for those "most execrable Longobards." The Dukes of Spoleto and Benevento, he added, desired his aid against Liutprand, who persecuted them solely because they were friends of the Pope. He concluded with an allusion to the preceding letter he had sent to Charles by the State embassy that had presented him with the golden keys of St. Peter's tomb. These were very precious relics, for they contained filings from the Holy Apostle's chains. But Charles Martel was still unable to afford any real help to the Church, and the Pope's discomfiture was increased by the failure of Duke Thrasimund to fulfil his promises. Therefore, from sheer despair, Gregory seemed at last on the point of opening negotiations with Liutprand, but expired on

the 10th of December, 741. Charles Martel had died two months earlier (October 22nd), leaving his two sons, Carloman and Pipin, to share France between them. In the preceding year (June 18, 740), the Emperor, Leo III., had passed away. So, within a short space of time, most of the chief actors in the world's drama vanished from the stage. Liutprand still survived, but not for long.

After only four days *sede vacante*, Pope Zacharias was elected (741-52). Being a Greek and consequently a friend of the Empire, he had little to fear from Constantinople or the Franks, but much to dread from the Longobards. The speed with which he was consecrated is worthy of note, inasmuch as the brevity of the interval forces us to believe that the Imperial sanction must have come from the Exarch by means of the Duke of Rome, or directly from the latter. The present Duke, Stephen by name, was elected in 739, and, contrary to established custom, had also the title of Patrician. Hence, it may be inferred that, like some other Italian dukedoms, the Duchy of Rome was also slipping away from the Exarchate and becoming almost independent of it, while still acknowledging the supremacy of the Emperor. Certainly, Rome was daily assuming more and more the aspect of an autonomous city, and the outlying territory constituting the Duchy and comprising nearly the whole of the so-called Patrimony of St. Peter, shared its independence. As we already know, Rome had an army of her own, commanded by the Duke, and was governed by the nobles under the Duke. Nevertheless, the Pope exercised great power, and this division of government constituted, throughout the Middle Ages, the special character of the future municipality of Rome. Then, as Venice and Naples were also escaping in one way or another from the rule

of the Exarchs, the old power of these Imperial governors of Italy was fast melting away. The new Pope, Zacharias, was also obliged to come to terms with Liutprand, in order to avoid facing him as a foe, and for the sake of regaining his lost territories, which were, in fact, restored to the Church. Thereupon Thrasimund, being left to stand alone, was compelled to become a monk and renounce his Duchy of Spoleto, which Liutprand then bestowed on a nephew of his own. Some years before (732) the Longobard king had appointed Gisulf II., son of Romwald II., as ruler of the Duchy of Benevento. He next arranged in person a treaty of peace with the Duke of Rome, which is another proof of the rising political importance of the latter's position. Either directly or indirectly Liutprand was now the master of the greater part of Italy, with no fear of any attack from France or the Empire, both realms being torn by internal strife. At this moment he might have succeeded in bringing all Italy under his rule, by expelling the Byzantines, assuming complete possession of the Duchies of Spoleto and Benevento, keeping the Pope in check, and everywhere suppressing the rising tendency to establish local self-government. But with all his talent and daring Liutprand was no statesman, and therefore incapable of steadily directing his policy towards a lofty ideal. Besides, he was already advanced in years and in failing health. He seems to have been on the point of seizing Ravenna, but was dissuaded from the idea by the Pope. He died in January, 744, and left his throne to his nephew, Hildeprand, who proved very unpopular and was soon driven from power.

## CHAPTER IX

### VENICE AND NAPLES

THE Exarchate, as we have seen, was rapidly falling to pieces, existed only in name, and was now little more than an ordinary dukedom. Rome was already constituted as a species of Republic, with an army of its own, that, on more than one occasion, had readily gone to war with the Exarchate, of which even Byzantine South Italy was now beginning to assert its independence. The late disturbances at Ravenna and in the Pentapolis had naturally quickened the desire for emancipation from the Empire. Thanks to her geographical position, Venice was first and foremost in this race. We have already noted how, even in Theodoric's day, Cassiodorus wrote to the Venetian Tribunes by his sovereign's command ; and we learn from this letter that the islands of the Lagoon were inhabited by an adventurous seafaring folk who lived in a state of semi-independence, each island having its own Tribune, but all probably united in a confederation. Undoubtedly at that time ~~Venice was in some degree a dependency of the Goths ;~~ and thus when Italy was conquered by Belisarius and Narses, she too was naturally subjected to the Byzantine rule, and would have remained under it for a long period but for the coming of the Longobards. These invaders recognised the importance of holding Venice, and therefore sought to conciliate her by granting her a certain amount of in-



dependence, in order to prevent the sea-girt city from falling into the enemy's hands. In 580, the Patriarch of Aquileia, weary of the harsh oppression exercised by the Longobards, took refuge at Grado, and thus the Venetians acquired a spiritual lord of their own. The Longobards being greatly angered by this change, Liutprand then requested the Pope to transfer the Bishop of Cividale to Aquileia and raise his position to that of a Patriarch. His prayer was granted; but when he insisted that the Patriarch of Grado should be made subordinate to the new tenant of Aquileia, the Venetians protested and the Pope yielded the point; so that the Longobards realised that they had only won a nominal victory without any substantial advantage. Thus Venice had rescued both her secular and ecclesiastical government from their hands and was ruled by Constantinople instead, under Tribunes elected by the people and sanctioned by the Emperor. There were probably twelve Venetian Tribunes, to correspond with the number of the islands, and officials with the same title were also established in some Byzantine cities of Central and Southern Italy, as, for instance, in Naples, Gaeta, Rimini, and even in the Pentapolis. The Pragmatic Sanction had already ruled that all *Judices* of the provinces should be chosen by the bishops and most influential personages among the inhabitants of the territory to be governed. The popular choice had then to be ratified in the Emperor's name.

In course of time, the continual insurrections of the Slaves on one side and of the Longobards on the other, caused the Venetians to feel the need of greater unity of rule, in order to strengthen their means of defence; hence they decided on the creation of a Doge. According to the regulations then in force, the Exarch should have summoned the bishops and notables to make choice on a candidate. But the chronicler Dandolo informs us, of

the contrary, that in 697 the people, the Patriarch of Grado, the bishops, notables, and Tribunes all met together and elected the "worthy and honourable," that is to say, the noble Paoluccio, to the new dignity. This Doge does not appear to have been the head of the military power, which, according to the Pragmatic Sanction, was then considered to be distinct from the civil power, and was vested in the *Magister Militum*. The Doge convoked popular assemblies, nominated tribunes and judges to administer justice to the people and the clergy; but excluding, of course, all ecclesiastical questions which were tried by a special tribunal, with right of appeal to the Doge. In accordance with Byzantine custom, the Doge was also empowered to convoke Synods and charge them to elect bishops, who were to receive investiture at his hands. Apparently, the election of the first Doge was duly confirmed by the Emperor, and the people selected nobles to fill all the other offices of the State. Paoluccio died in 717 and was succeeded by Marcello, who had been Master of the Soldiery, ruled as Doge for nine years, and was followed by Orso. It was during the latter's reign that Liutprand took advantage of the strife for the Images to seize Ravenna, whence the Exarch Eutychius made his escape to Venice. Then were received more letters from the Pope ordering the Doge Orso and the Patriarch Antoninus to recapture Ravenna, for the purpose of reinstating the Exarch. The successful accomplishment of this task proves that the city of the Lagoon already possessed a strong and united local government. In 737 the Doge Orso was killed in a civil war that had broken out between the national party, of which he was the head, and the faction that favoured greater subjection to Constantinople and that gained the upper hand for a time. Then, for a period of five years (737-41), instead of appointing a Doge for life, a Master of the Soldiery was elected for a

term of twelve months only, as in the case of the Tribunes. Towards the close of 741, however, a fresh resolution brought about the deposition and blinding of John, the Master of the Soldiery, and restored the office of Doge (742) in the person of Diodato, the son of Orso. The Doge being opposed to the Imperial faction, leant upon the Longobards, and was overthrown when the latter were defeated by the Franks. The great struggle between the Franks and the Longobards, provoked by the Popes for the purpose of securing their own independence and preparing the way towards temporal power, unavoidably led, as will be seen, to the downfall of the Franks, favoured the rise of the Longobard power, and promoted, later on, the municipal autonomy of Italian cities.

The history of the Duchy of Naples is very different from that of Venice. In Naples, the population was, probably, divided into *Scholæ* as in other Byzantine-Italian cities, and likewise governed by *Optimates*. In Naples, the ancient municipal *Curia* (or Corporation) had ceased to exist, and the city itself belonged to Campania, which was ruled by the Judge or Governor of the province who was subordinate to the Prefect of Italy appointed by the Emperor. The Pragmatic Sanction greatly augmented the civil power of the bishops, who practically decided the election of a judge, from among the natives of the territory. After the year 638, we find the bishop acting as governor, instead of the judge, and with him a military chief, who was a Duke or Master of the Soldiery. At first these were two separate offices, but their functions were afterwards combined in a single official who ruled the so-called Duchy of Naples. The Duke was appointed by the Emperor to the command of the army, or, more strictly speaking, of the armed inhabitants of the city, and the counts and tribunes commanding the various garrisons of the province now under his orders. Thanks to this

organisation, Naples was enabled to offer a very creditable resistance to the Longobards—particularly to those of Spoleto and Benevento—and thus preserved its independence, which soon grew apace.

During the reign of Gregory I. we note that Naples had neither a Duke nor a Master of the Soldiery, and that the Pope complained of this to the Emperor and implored him to provide the city with the required leaders. But no attention being paid to his request, he sent a Tribune to encourage the Neapolitans to defend their city ; consequently he gained great authority throughout the Duchy, and watched over it for some time. In fact, the Pope was long occupied in checking the corrupt practices of the Neapolitan bishops, and protecting the citizens and Decurions from the immoderate extortions of the Imperial tax-collectors. When the Emperor Constans visited Italy, about 661, he altered the form of the Dukedom so as to render it a stronger centre of defence against the Longobards. In fact, from that time forward, we find Naples withstanding both Longobard and Saracenic attacks with far greater energy than before, and later on valiantly resisting the Norman invaders, to whom it was finally obliged to succumb. The new Duke of Naples, also styled the Consul, or Master of the Soldiery, was very different from his predecessors, having little in common with them save his title. But we have no detailed knowledge of his real attributes. Elected by the people to whom he belonged, he had command of the army, and combined not only the functions of the old Duke and old Master of the Soldiery, but also those of the judge, thus wielding, like the Exarch, both civil and military power. Neither is it possible to ascertain the precise extent of this Duchy of Naples, although it must have comprised, originally at least, almost the whole of ancient Campania, including even Amalfi and Gaeta,

which were subsequently detached from it. But it is certain that the Duchy of Naples formed an integral portion of the Empire and was under Imperial administration. Greek was the official language, and all Neapolitan coins were stamped with the Emperor's image with his name inscribed in Greek characters, while the reverse bore the name of the city, likewise in Greek. After Constans' decease, the Emperor began to neglect the mainland of Italy and the Southern Provinces in particular, simply because the officers charged with the government of Sicily were continually engaged in defending the island from harassing Saracen attacks. Accordingly, the Duchy of Naples, being left unaided, had to rely on its own resources, and having to live sword in hand, as it were, was known as the *Militia*, or the *Militia of the Romans*, or even the *Militia of the Neapolitans*. By slow degrees, the Duchy became more detached from the Empire, until it finally obtained the position of an autonomous State. By the year 764, it had had thirteen Dukes, whose terms of office were of such varying duration as to induce the belief that they were appointed for life.

Many strange vicissitudes befell the Duchy. First of all, in the days of Gregory I., we find it subject to the Pope's domination; later on, we see it incorporated with the Empire, to which it remained faithful even during the struggle for the Images, without taking any part in the rebellion of Ravenna and the Pentapolis; then it gradually withdrew from the Empire, and was finally separated from it by Duke Stephen II. (elected in 755), who rendered it independent and again brought it closer to Rome. At that date the official language was Latin, instead of Greek; and on all coins in daily use the Emperor's head was replaced by that of St. Januarius, as a symbol of independence. The Saint's name was inscribed in Latin, while on the



obverse the Greek appellation of the city was replaced by that of the Duke, and also in Latin. The Emperor's name, however, was still inscribed on coins of higher value and on official documents. But the Dukes were now independent, declaring war, making peace, and concluding treaties in their own right. During this period Stephen II. became so closely connected with the Church, that on being left a widower with several children he was appointed to the See of Naples, at the death of the former bishop in 766, received the tonsure in Rome and continued to rule Naples jointly with his son Gregory II., who succeeded to him and reigned as Duke for twenty-seven years and a half. Thus the Dukedom began to be considered hereditary, at least in some degree.

## BOOK IV

### *THE FRANKS AND THE FALL OF THE LONGOBARD KINGDOM*

#### CHAPTER I

##### THE MEROVINGIANS AND THE ORIGIN OF THE CAROLINGIAN DYNASTY

THE Franks had been spreading over Gaul and gaining higher importance for some time past. Before long they were fated to become the preponderating power in Europe, and they were even to conquer Italy and inaugurate the commencement of an entirely new epoch. Hence it is necessary to give a rough sketch of their history. The Franks were composed of many different Germanic tribes settled on the right bank of the Rhine. At first they drifted into the Empire by dribblets: some of them were to be found in the army, others among the tillers of the soil, others again among the slaves. When Stilicho recalled to Italy the legions guarding the Rhine in order to swell his ranks against Alaric, the Franks, like other Germanic tribes, swept over the river in hordes (406). But, unlike the Goths, Vandals, and Longobards, they did not rush on from one region to another, far removed from their own land. On the contrary, they advanced slowly, and gradually conquered

Gaul without altogether deserting Germany, which continued to send them supplies of food and reinforcements of armed men. Accordingly, even when settled in the Empire, they retained their own customs and institutions, as, for instance, that of collective property, longer than other barbarian invaders. Meanwhile the Romans, with whom they were brought in contact, likewise preserved their own laws and institutions. Thus, the Municipal Curia lasted longer in Gaul than in other lands. Also, if the two races blended together more slowly than elsewhere, their fusion was less sudden and more organic. It does not appear that the Franks seized, like other barbarians, a third, or more than a third, of the lands of the conquered race. Great Roman proprietors are to be seen living side by side with great Frankish landowners, Romans are allowed to fill public offices, and are not even forbidden to enter the army. The only marked difference between them was that from the beginning the *guidrigild*, or blood fine, for killing a Frank was double the amount exacted for killing a Roman. The Franks being a confederation of various tribes, it naturally followed that, owing to diversity of manners and customs, the Salian and Ripuarian Franks soon split asunder, and were both sub-divided into various petty kingdoms, which, being continually in fierce conflict with one another, thus retarded the progress of the nation at large. Whenever some prince, gifted with political and military talent, arose among them, all the tribes united in one kingdom, but split asunder again at the sovereign's death. Their history ran in this course for several centuries, until Charlemagne succeeded for a while in subjecting nearly the whole of Europe to his rule.

The first man who bound all the Franks together was Clovis, the founder of the Merovingian dynasty.

He had become the chief of a Salian tribe on his father's decease in 481; by force of talent and valour he succeeded in uniting the Salians and Ripuarians, and was the recognised founder of the monarchy. But he was also notoriously unscrupulous, and in order to satisfy his ambition was guilty of most abominable cruelty towards kinsmen and allies, ridding himself of them by bloodshed and treason, causing some to be assassinated by his hirelings and slaying others with his own hand. The number of atrocious crimes attributed to him and his successors is so enormous, that one inclines to think it must have been greatly swelled in legendary accounts; nevertheless, with all possible deductions, enough remains to make us shudder. All these crimes, joined with much vicious excess, finally reduced the dynasty to such weakness as to cause its overthrow. The incidents of Clovis's career, which mainly promoted the formation of the monarchy, were his wars with the Alamanni and his conversion to Catholicism, instead of to the Arian creed adopted by the other barbarian tribes. The Alamannic war was an important event in history, in that it marked the beginning of the reaction of the West against the East, which was continued after Clovis's time and put an end to the wholesale migrations of the Germanic tribes. The king's conversion to Catholicism, in fulfilment of a vow made during the war, should Heaven grant him victory, led to the conversion of his people. Thus the monarchy soon gained favour with the Church of Rome, which, by means of its bishops, was more firmly organised than the Arian Church. So the Franks became God's chosen people for the defence of religion and of the Pope, a fact that also facilitated their fusion with the Romans. And it is really very curious to note how even at that time mankind had a clear prevision of the

future greatness of this northern race. Gregory of Tours, who wrote shortly after this time, frequently repeats, while relating the continual atrocities of the Frankish king, that : "Every day the Almighty brought some enemy of Clovis to ruin, thus enlarging the dominions of this king, inasmuch as he walked righteously in the ways of the Lord, and did that which was good in His sight." Elsewhere he positively styles him a new Constantine. So, too, other writers of about the same period speak of him in a manner which clearly shows that this new Constantine gives them a forecast of the Charlemagne of after times. Another remarkable point is the truly marvellous persistence with which the Popes clung to their purpose throughout many centuries, almost forcing the Franks to accept the mission pre-assigned to them by the will of the Church ; and never ceased their efforts until that aim was achieved by the coronation of Charlemagne and the foundation of the temporal power. Meanwhile, the Emperor Athanasius conferred upon Clovis the insignia of the Patrician and Consular orders, with which he was solemnly invested in the Church of St. Martin at Tours, where he was hailed by the prelates as the new Constantine, the man of God. Paris was then chosen as the capital of his kingdom.

When Clovis died in 511, his dominions were divided between his four sons, and then began that period of luxury, corruption, civil war, bloodshed, treachery, and murder which caused Gaul to be compared to the kingdom of the Atridæ. In 558 Chlotchar I., the last surviving son of Clovis, reunited all the Franks under the sceptre, but, after his decease, the monarchy was again shared between his four sons, and remained thus divided for a long course of years. There has been much discussion as to the real nature of these partitions,



which involved the country in a continued series of civil wars. Certain French historians maintain that the royalty was divided rather than the realm itself (*la royauté plutôt que le royaume*). But, in point of fact, the Franks were not yet fused into one people, had no conception of nationality or of the State, and therefore France was still unborn. To the barbarian mind, this kingdom, solely united by violence and conquest, seemed the property of the conqueror, hence, by the law of inheritance, it was divided among his sons. Even public service was mainly rendered to the person of the king. The idea of any central and organic administration was altogether non-existent; there was little distinction between public and private rights. But although this barbarian society was still so scattered, thanks to continual contact with the Romans, to the influence of the Church and to the geographical unity of the land, the Franks were slowly, but steadily, tending to form a single and united people. The four separate kingdoms (Neustria, Austrasia, Aquitaine and Burgundy) which arose, disappeared, and rose again after the death of Clovis I., were substantially reduced to only two (Austrasia and Neustria) during the seventh century. Neustria, which consisted of West and South Gaul, was occupied by the Salian Franks, in whom the Roman element predominated; whereas among the Ripuarian Franks of Austrasia, Germanic influences chiefly prevailed, owing to continued intercourse with their old country across the Rhine.

At first Salian Neustria was the leading power, for Clovis, the founder of the monarchy and of the Merovingian line, belonged to the Salian race. Likewise the first four kings, who at different times united the four realms in one, and of whom Clovis II. (638-56) was the last, were all of Neustrian birth. The seat of these Frankish governments was usually the king's palace, and the

master or mayor of the palace was the prime minister. Originally, the latter's functions were limited to the management of the royal household and lands, but in course of time his power grew until he successively rose to be Finance Minister, Prime Minister, and finally head of the State. When the four kingdoms had been reduced to two (Neustria and Austrasia), the centre of gravity was transferred by slow degrees from the first to the second. As the Ripuarians prevailed over the Salians, so Germanic influences naturally prevailed over Roman. Then, meetings or assemblies of the people grew more and more frequent, and the Germanic nobles, who afterwards formed the feudal aristocracy, gained increased power. In Austrasia, these nobles adhered more and more closely to the mayor of the palace, who was sometimes elected by them and recognised as their chief. Thus, by slow degrees, the mayor acquired more power than the monarch, for the Merovingian line so rapidly deteriorated, became so weak and contemptible, that its last representatives were known as the *rois fainéants*, and finally driven to yield the throne to their rivals. Thereupon they were succeeded by the stronger, more intelligent, and also more virtuous dynasty of the Carolingians.

After the decease of Clovis II. (656), the mayors of the palace rose to such power in Austrasia, that they seemed on the point of converting that realm into a separate, autonomous Duchy. But the strength of the ties between Salians and Ripuarians, together with the country's geographical unity, unavoidably led to the formation of a single realm, in which the Ripuarians would predominate. So this new kingdom was founded by Pippin, surnamed Heristal, from the name of his own castle. He was mayor of the palace in Austrasia, where he likewise assumed the title of Duke, and finally became the virtual master of the kingdom. On his death (16th

December, 714), the country was plunged in disorder by the strife between his heirs, but finally his natural son, Charles Martel, won the victory, and although he never attained to a higher dignity than that of a Duke in Austrasia, and of mayor of the palace in Neustria, he practically succeeded to his father as hereditary prince of the whole realm. A man of high political aptitude and distinguished prowess in the field, he was able to establish his dynasty on a permanent footing.

By a series of successful campaigns against Saxons, Frisians, Bavarians, and Alamanni (718-30), Charles put an end to the invasions of Germanic tribes, and once assured of safety on that side, turned his arms against the Moors, who, pushing through Spain in junction with the African Mussulmans, had already swept across the Pyrenees. In 732, he fought a pitched battle with the invaders near Poitiers and defeated them signally with great slaughter. According to the legendary account of Paulus Diaconus, the dead numbered no less than 375,000. In any case it was a memorable victory, inasmuch as it almost shattered the menacing power of the Mussulmans in France, so that shortly afterwards they were driven back over the mountains to Spain. In 737, Charles Martel likewise occupied Provence, thus became master of all France, and held it to his death in 741.

## CHAPTER II

### CHARLES MARTEL AND THE PRIMITIVE ORIGIN OF FEUDALISM—THE POPE APPEALS TO THE FRANKS FOR AID

CHARLES MARTEL was not only a great soldier but was also a fine statesman ; and it was owing to him that the Frankish aristocracy now began to be organised in the mode that led to the institution of the feudal order destined to give a new shape to European society, and demanding our attention on account of the great importance it attained in Italy as well as elsewhere. There has been much dispute as to the origin of feudalism, some writers attributing it to a Roman, others to a Germanic source. But the fact is that, like all mediæval institutions, it was the product of a confused medley of Germanic and Roman elements. It is a Germanic aristocracy so far as regards the men who organised and composed it ; nevertheless, it is also an institution of Roman origin, although its primitive elements were sensibly changed by Germanic social conditions.

The fief was undoubtedly a novel form of individual property, and such property was entirely unknown in primitive barbarian society. It combined the Roman conception of man's absolute and personal dominion over the soil, with the equally Roman idea of the dominion of the

law over man. Thus, as soon as Germanic society had been already altered and transformed by the infusion of foreign elements, powerful lords began to arise in Germany as well as in Rome. Having acquired territory by conquest, they became the chiefs of the army and assumed the principal share in the government.

At the same time that Germanic society deserted its original mould and lost its primitive character by adopting this new method, Roman society was also undergoing transformation, although by a different road. By continually enlarging their estates, the great Roman landowners had become masters of huge stretches of country ; but these enormous possessions gave them no political rights, since, in theory at least, all government emanated from the Emperor alone. But fact ran counter to theory, and indeed always ran farther away from it. As the Empire declined, and the strength of the central government diminished, wealthy landowners became masters not only of the actual soil, but of all those who dwelt on and tilled it, and consequently assumed the right of commanding and ruling all the inhabitants of their estates. In Roman society this fact seemed a result of decadence, but, in Germanic society, on the contrary, it seemed the effect of a progressive transformation, whereby its cohesion and strength were increased. Thus both societies, starting from opposite points and advancing in opposite directions, finally met, and mingling together, produced a new social edifice.

The vast Roman estates (*latifundia*), cultivated by slaves or tenants who paid rent in kind, grew ever vaster, by absorbing the lands of neighbouring petty proprietors. For the latter, being overburdened with taxes and debts, always ended by voluntarily ceding their property to richer men, and paying rent for permission to occupy it as their tenants. Thus they forfeited their independence



as well as their property ; but gained patrons who freed them from taxes and usury, and allowed them a more bearable life. Large landowners often held public offices which exempted them from certain taxes, and as an increased bit of land here or there caused no addition to the general expenses of the estate, this arrangement was equally advantageous to themselves and their dependents. Accordingly, numbers of petty proprietors hastened to adopt the same course ; and, occasionally, whole villages yielded their fields and pastures to some great owner who was already assuming the position of a petty feudal sovereign.

The same changes were occurring in the case of great properties belonging to the Church. In fact, bishops and monastic orders had become great landed proprietors, thanks to the donations of their devoted flocks. Owing to the increasing number of immunities and privileges they obtained, ecclesiastics enjoyed many more advantages than laymen. They soon began to let their huge possessions on leases called *precaria*, or precarious leases, because they could be revoked at a moment's notice, and as the canon rent exacted for these leases was very small, any land ceded on such terms was styled a *benefice*.

The number and value of all the privileges granted, both to laymen and ecclesiastics, soon rose to such proportions as to enfeeble the State and augment the power of the Church. Even as early as the sixth century the great landowner exercised a species of jurisdiction, not only over his slaves, but even over his tenants and dependents. As he was responsible for them to the governing power, the latter never intervened save at his request. In Byzantine Italy, the great proprietors had become commanders of the army, holding all the chief offices and transmitting them by inheritance to their families. The office was connected with the estates of the man who held it,

and accordingly he exercised a double right of jurisdiction, *i.e.*, as a landowner and as a civil or military officer. Thus, an aristocracy was erected consisting of landed proprietors, filling high offices of the State in virtue of their possessions, and of functionaries who grew rich through the offices they held. Sometimes these nobles followed the example we have seen given by Cassiodorus ; they converted their slaves, tenantry, clients, and bailiffs into an armed force to protect their lives and property from all the dangers threatening them in times of invasion.

In conclusion, Roman society was splitting into a host of rich and powerful individuals, styled *honesti, clarissimi*, and *nobiles*, who despised the *vilissima plebs* of proletarians. In Germanic society, on the contrary, where the State was unknown, and centralisation undreamt of, social power was naturally in the hands of warriors who despised the weak and helpless, and grew wealthy by force of arms. Thus arose the new aristocracy, which afterwards took shape under the name of feudalism.

In the ecclesiastical as well as in the secular world, the same process was carried on. Prelates, churches, and cloisters conceded grants of land in the shape of *benefices*. Men began to be divided into different classes, corresponding with their respective tenure of land—which was another characteristic of feudalism—and prelates, churches, and cloisters became surrounded by groups of beneficiaries who were vassals in germ. The Merovingian kings were lavish of grants of immunity to bishops, and levied no taxes on Church lands ; hence all fiscal agents were naturally prohibited from setting foot on ecclesiastical territory.

If we now give a glance to the future characteristics of the fief, we shall find that they had previously existed in the Roman world, and were afterwards introduced among the Germanic tribes, but underwent essential change in

the process. There is never anything entirely new in history ; the present and future are invariably built up with fragments of the past.

We already know from the pages of Tacitus that every barbarian king was attended by a *Comitatus* composed of his most trusted familiars, who not only lived with their prince, but fought in his cause side by side with him. The Frankish *Antrustiones*, who resembled the Longobard *Gasindi* and were the precursors of Charlemagne's Paladins, derived their origin from the early barbarian *Comitatus*. The Frankish monarchs made lavish donations both to their trusted familiars and to the leaders of their army, by granting them benefices in land. Public offices too, which, among the Germanic tribes, were always in the royal gift, were likewise granted on beneficiary tenure. Neither the collection of taxes nor the administration of justice was conducted on the public, lawful, and impersonal method that prevailed in the Roman State. Even the obligation of rendering military service was regarded among Germanic tribes rather as a pledge of personal fidelity to the monarch than as a duty to the State. Thus all society became increasingly divided into protectors and protected. And by the time kings began to realise that their newly-created lords threatened to become greater than themselves, and were reducing the monarchy to a confederation of powerful chiefs, only bound to the sovereign by the tie of allegiance, it was too late to remedy the evil.

The first real step in the direction of feudalism was made by Charles Martel. In his time the bishops had become so wealthy that they are believed to have held one-third of all the arable land in France. These vast possessions, with all the immunities attaching to them, not only enhanced the political independence of the bishops with regard to their king, but also their religious inde-

pendence with regard to the Pope. Nevertheless, Charles Martel made them feel the weight of his hand by starting one of the most remarkable reforms achieved in his reign. The necessities of war, and more particularly of his great conflict with the Moslems, obliged him to find means of giving generous remuneration to the leaders of his army. So with little hesitation he proceeded to depose certain bishops and bestow their sees on faithful followers, who were usually men of war. But there was nothing extraordinary in this, at a time when bishops fought at the head of their troops in the same fashion as secular lords. Later on, Charles stripped many cloisters, bishoprics, and churches of a considerable portion of their lands and bestowed them on his generals, who had to bear the expenses of the war and pay the soldiery who fought under their flag, from their own purses. Thus, while damaging the clergy, he rendered the nobles more powerful and more devoted to the crown.

But we cannot be surprised that ecclesiastical tradition should have adopted a bitterly hostile tone, and styled him the enemy of the bishops and despoiler of the Church. Nevertheless, Charles Martel had rendered such signal service to the cause of religion and the Church, that it proved necessary to pardon such acts of spoliation as he had committed for the purpose of bringing the war against the infidels to a triumphant end. Even his German campaigns were advantageous to the faith, for his military expeditions to that country were preceded by religious missions, which laid the basis of the fixed organisation of the Catholic Church, and prepared the way for the conquest by which, in its turn, their own task was facilitated. As we have noted, Ireland had already begun to send out missions for the conversion of the heathen. Later, the work was continued by Anglo-Saxon missionaries, greatest of whom was Winfrith, afterwards known

as St. Boniface. His chief task in Germany, which had been already converted by Irish friars, consisted in organising the Catholic Church there, connecting it with that of France, and placing both under the absolute authority of the Pope. Thus St. Boniface, who was aided by Charles Martel, prepared the way for that monarch's conquests, and for the assimilation of the Germanic tribes, while also helping to promote the future establishment of the Carolingian Empire. Henceforth, popes, princes, and missionaries unconsciously co-operated in the formation of the civil, religious, and military union that was soon to be realised in Charlemagne's new empire. Thanks to St. Boniface, fresh churches and cloisters were everywhere erected, and among them the widely-renowned Monastery of Fulda (744). The Saint continued his labours for many years, until, believing his work in Germany completed, his fiery zeal moved him to seek a fresh field for his apostolic energies, and, accordingly, he went to preach the true faith among the heathen in Friesland, and joyously suffered martyrdom there about the year 754. Considering the state of affairs at this period, it is not astonishing that the Popes should have turned to France for assistance. For we have seen that in 739 Pope Gregory, being threatened by Liutprand, and aware that the Emperor would grant him no help, appealed twice to Charles Martel, and fixed all his hopes in that monarch and the Franks. It has been stated by one writer that the Pope caused Charles Martel to be told at the time that he and the people of Rome intended to separate from the Empire. This statement was made fifty years later in the so-called sequel to the Chronicle of Fredegarius, but, at any rate, it serves to show what ideas were already in the air regarding the existing dissension between Rome and Constantinople, that was to produce far graver consequences at a later date.



## CHAPTER III

PIPPIN IS ELECTED KING OF THE FRANKS AND RECEIVES THE PAPAL CONSECRATION FROM THE HANDS OF ST. BONIFACE—THE POPE, WHEN MENACED BY AISTULF, FLIES TO FRANCE TO SEEK HELP

CHARLES MARTEL, who had become in fact, if not in name, the King of the Franks, was succeeded by his sons Carloman and Pippin. Nevertheless, as their legal status was merely that of Mayors of the Palace, it was deemed advisable to release the Merovingian heir, Childeric, from the cloister (743) and place him on the throne. He was the last of the *rois fainéants*, and the merest shadow of a king.

It might have been expected that a fierce and sanguinary struggle would break out between the two brothers; but Carloman, on the contrary, after perpetrating cruel massacres in a campaign against the Alemanni (746), retired from the world in disgust, first to a monastery he had founded on Mount Soracte, and then to Monte Cassino; so that Pippin was left to reign alone. Then, however, it became still more apparent that, legally speaking, Childeric was the only legitimate sovereign, although in appearance and in fact an utterly dispossessed king. The question could only be solved by violent means, yet, if left unsolved, Pippin would have always

remained in the false position of an usurper. Hence he decided to apply to the Pope, Zacharias III., whose religious authority might achieve what could not be done by the sword. Accordingly, he despatched a State embassy to Rome to ask if it were lawful that a man who did absolutely nought should bear the kingly title, rather than he who really carried on the government and fulfilled all the duties of a sovereign. None, indeed, save the Pope could release subjects from their oath of fealty and quiet their consciences, by putting an end to this abnormal state of things.

What reply was to be expected from Zacharias III. ? The new dynasty already existed *de facto* ; it had a firm grasp of the monarchy, had fought in defence of the faith, and was the only line able to afford the Church the assistance that no other power was able or willing to grant.

The principle of hereditary succession to the throne had never been sanctioned by the Empire, and among barbarians the monarchy was elective in a general way. Accordingly, the Pope made reply that, provided it were advantageous to the country, and truly for the public good, it would be fitting that the man who exercised the functions of royalty should assume the title of king. Thereupon Pippin resolved to accomplish his *coup d'état*. At the assembly of nobles convened at Soissons, in November, 751, he was solemnly raised to the throne and proclaimed king, "by the counsel and consent of all the Franks, with the approval of the Holy See, by the choice of all France, by the episcopal rite of consecration, and by the sworn allegiance of the nobles." The election of the sovereign was effected in the Frankish manner, and then St. Boniface, at the head of the bishops, performed the ceremony of anointing him in the name of the Pope, a rite recalling the consecration of King Saul by the hand

of Samuel. The wretched Childeric received the tonsure, and was then confined in a monastery together with his son.

If the reader will now refer to all that we have said on the subject, he will promptly recognise how many weighty motives were urging the Papacy to side with the Franks and secure their protection. But Zacharias III., who wished to stand well with all men, had held an interview with Liutprand and done his best to arrange a lasting peace with him. The Longobard king had promised to restore to the patrimony of the Church the lands he had wrested from it in the Exarchate and Pentapolis; he was also pledged to recapture and restore to the Pope the four castles in the Roman Duchy which Thrasimund had unlawfully seized. Nevertheless, the terms of the proposed twenty years' peace were hardly arranged before Liutprand infringed them by occupying the Spoletan territory and bestowing it on one of his nephews, while he appointed Gisulf, son of Romwald II., to the dukedom of Benevento (742). However, after another meeting with the Pope at Turin, he presently gave up the four castles and fulfilled the greater part of his promises. But on his return to Pavia in 743 he again despatched an army to the Exarchate, for the purpose of attacking Ravenna. Then, once more remembering the entreaties of Pope Zacharias, who had sought him at Pavia the previous year, he was on the point of yielding to them when his life came to an end in January, 744.

His son Hildebrand succeeded him on the throne, but proved so incapable that he was speedily deposed to make room for Ratchis, the Duke of Friuli, of whose five years' reign few particulars are known. He abdicated in 749, and afterwards retired from the world and became a monk. The next king, Aistulf, was valiant and impetuous in war, but a very poor statesman. He advanced on Ravenna, and by capturing that city put an end to the Exarchate.

Immediately afterwards he marched against Rome (752), where Zacharias had recently died. Stephen II. was then raised to the Papal chair, but only survived his election for three days. His successor assumed the same name, and by reason of the brevity of the late reign was also styled Stephen II. instead of III. (752-57). This Stephen was a well-skilled statesman, and proved a great Pope. His first act was to send ambassadors to Aistulf to arrange a treaty of peace that, although intended to endure for forty years, was broken in four months with no possibility of renewal (752). Various other embassies were sent to open negotiations, but the Longobard king only replied by threatening to seize the Duchy of Rome. So there was nothing to hope from that quarter.

Accordingly, the Pope began to treat with the Empire, and when John the *Silentiarius*, or captain of the Imperial Guard, came over as ambassador from Constantinople, he sent him with his own brother Paul on a mission to Aistulf, to demand the retrocession of the cities and lands unlawfully usurped by the Longobards in the Exarchate and Pentapolis—*ut Reipublicae loca . . . usurpata proprio restitueret dominio*.<sup>1</sup> Aistulf only made reply that he would treat of those affairs directly with the Emperor through ambassadors of his own. Thereupon the *Silentiarius* withdrew, and the Pope sent envoys to accompany him back to Constantinople, to advise the Court that as no reliance could be placed in the Longobards, it would be better to send over an army to protect Rome and all Italy from their aggressions. So far the Pope seems to have been on friendly terms with the Emperor. In fact, Stephen II. had appealed to him when Aistulf, after seizing the Exarchate "*fremens ut leo*," threatened to vent the full measure of his wrath on Rome and the Roman people. The danger was really great and

<sup>1</sup> "Liber Pontificalis," i. 442.

most pressing. Indeed, the Pope offered up solemn prayers and litanies, walking barefoot and sprinkled with ashes at the head of a great procession to St. Peter's, Santa Maria Maggiore, and St. Paul's, with the treaty of peace violated by Aistulf dangling from the crucifix that was borne before him. Meanwhile neither aid nor hope of aid was forthcoming from Constantinople, and affairs seemed at a desperate pass. Hence, what could have been more natural than the idea of appealing to the Franks? Pippin was not likely to forget that he owed his consecration to the Papacy. Therefore Stephen II. applied to him and caused him to be informed that he, the Pope, wished to visit him in state, but first desired to receive a formal invitation, not only to save his own dignity, but also as a protection against any hindrance to his journey on the part of Aistulf. The King of the Franks hastened to show his goodwill to the Pope, but before taking a step which might involve the necessity of plunging into war, he wished to be assured of the consent of his nobles, since, in case of need, it would have been difficult to conduct an army to Italy without their support. The Frankish lords had no reason to feel any special dislike to the Longobards, seeing that the latter had so promptly answered their call for help during the war against the Saracens. Thereupon the Pope, being a shrewd politician, addressed a letter to the Frankish nobles, that has been preserved to this day, in which he exhorted them to show no failing in their devotion to St. Peter and Holy Church. Accordingly, when Pippin called them together in assembly, a resolution was quickly passed to the effect that a State embassy should be dispatched to Rome to urge the Pope to visit France, with the fullest assurances of welcome. The ambassadors selected were two great Frankish personages—Chrodegang, Bishop of Metz, and the *most glorious* Duke Autichar. They reached Rome in 753,



when Aistulf's Longobards had just seized Ceccano, a town belonging to the Roman duchy. Shortly before (in September, 753) the Silentarius John had come back from Constantinople charged with the mission of persuading the Pope to go in person to Aistulf for the purpose of prevailing on him to restore the lands he had wrested from the Empire. So, on the 14th October, 753, Stephen II., with the Silentarius, the two Frank ambassadors, and a numerous retinue, went to Pavia to attempt to induce the Longobard to restore his ill-gotten territory to its lawful owner, *propria restitueret propriis*.<sup>2</sup> But nothing was gained by this step, for Aistulf accepted the gifts offered him, but refused to yield an inch of soil. Thereupon the Pope continued his journey, and, despite the King's efforts to change his purpose, crossed the Alps and entered France. In the month of December, when still at about a hundred miles' distance from the manor of Ponthion, between Vitry and Bar-le-Duc, he was met by Pippin's first-born son Charles, then a mere lad, but afterwards known to history as Charles the Great, or Charlemagne. Then, on the 6th January, 754, the King himself rode forth to welcome the Pontiff, and, dismounting from his horse, escorted him on foot for a considerable distance. The august visitor was received with great ceremony at Ponthion, and the joyous crowd chanted sacred hymns in his honour. The moment they entered the palace the Pope besought the King to personally champion the cause of St. Peter and of the Roman Republic, *causam Beati Petri et Reipublicæ Romanorum*. And the King unhesitatingly swore "to win back the Exarchate and the other lost cities and rights of the Republic." But why this change of tone? After demanding the restitution of territory to the Empire, we now hear only of St. Peter and the Roman Republic, and

<sup>2</sup> "Liber Pontificalis," i. 446 and foll.

henceforth we continually hear of the Republic, of St. Peter, and of God's holy Church, but no syllable more concerning the Empire.

After Aistulf's explicit refusal, it was obvious that the stolen territory could be only regained by force of arms. Therefore the Pope, being naturally obliged to think first of his own interests, must have rejoiced to perceive on reaching France that Pippin, although most willing to fight for him and the Church, was nowise inclined to go to war for the Emperor's advantage. Whatever territories he should win by the sword, provided he did not claim them as his own by right of conquest, piety might induce him to cede to the Church and to the head of the Church, but never to others. Besides, even the Longobards would prefer that they should be yielded to the Pope, from whom there might be a chance of wresting them anew, rather than see them in the hands of either the Emperor or the Franks. Therefore it was natural that the shrewd Pontiff should endeavour to profit by the situation. So in his speeches and letters he said nothing about the lands being restored to the Empire, and only spoke of the necessity of enforcing their restitution to Rome, to St. Peter, to the Church. Meanwhile, Pippin had invited him to spend the winter in the abbey of St. Denis, near Paris, and thence both the King and his guest addressed repeated missives to Aistulf, urging him, for the avoidance of bloodshed, peacefully to "restore to the Republic and Holy Church their lawful possessions and privileges." In short, it would appear that they now demanded for the Pope both the Exarchate and the Pentapolis, of which the Longobards had robbed the Empire. From the moment that Aistulf had seized the Exarchate the Popes had conceived the idea of succeeding to the Imperial rule in Italy. They did not desire the Longobards to become preponderant by the retention

of those provinces. Accordingly, if Pippin should refuse to restore the latter to the Empire after he had won them, it would be an excellent opportunity to augment the strength of the Church by persuading him to cede her his conquests.

This is why Stephen omitted all mention of the Empire and began to speak of the Republic and people of Rome, which, according to the ideas of the period, was under the special protection of St. Peter, of whom the Pope, as visible Head of the Church, was the earthly representative. The Roman people had elected the Emperor, and still elected the Pope. They were therefore identical with the Empire and the sacred Republic, which, in common parlance, was then confused with the Church. Hence it seemed the simplest thing in the world to substitute for the Empire the Church and the Pope. Even the four domains or castles, which Liutprand had snatched from the Roman Duchy, that was already considered, at least theoretically, to be the Pope's legitimate property, had been restored to "St. Peter" by Liutprand himself.

But in point of fact, Aistulf, unconcerned with subtle distinctions of this kind, was resolved to yield nothing to any one. Hence war had to be made. Pippin summoned his nobles to two Councils, the first of which assembled at Braisne, a short distance from Soissons, on March 7, 754, and the second at Quierzy, near Laon, on Easter Day, April 14th. War was decided upon at the latter. There is also mention of a document recording Pippin's solemn pledge that the territories he purposed to conquer would be restored by him to the Pope. Some historians express strong doubts as to the existence of the said document, but at all events, whether in writing or not, the promise was really made and subsequently fulfilled.

All this time, the Pope had been overwhelmed with

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anxiety. Besides the necessity of crossing the Alps in late autumn, the raw winter season in France, the persistent opposition of some of the nobles to the war, were more than enough to disturb his mind and injure his health. In addition to all this, Pippin's brother Carloman, at the instigation of Aistulf, it would seem, suddenly left the monastery of Monte Cassino and came to France, just at this time, to plead with his brother in favour of the Longobard cause. This naturally increased the Pope's anxiety and was also most irritating to Pippin, who naturally feared that his brother's reappearance might awaken his nephew's hopes of succeeding to the paternal throne. But what could a monk accomplish against the authority of the Pope, and against the power of a sovereign who was master of the whole united realm? In fact, Carloman was speedily forced to withdraw to a cloister at Vienne, on the Rhone, and died there shortly afterwards. Even his sons were compelled to receive the tonsure.

At last, overburdened by all his troubles, Stephen II. fell sick, and during his illness, legend tells us that St. Denis, St. Peter, and St. Paul appeared to him in a vision and promised him entire recovery if he would erect a new altar in the church of St. Denis. So, by July 24, 754, not only was the new altar built, but the same church witnessed a solemn event that was a proof of the Pope's fine acumen and perseverance. For on that day, at the high altar of St. Denis, he anointed King Pippin, crowned him and Queen Bertha, his wife, and also consecrated their two sons, Charles and Carloman. "But, surely," the reader might exclaim, "Pippin had been already crowned and consecrated by St. Boniface, by order of the Pope. For what reason was the ceremony repeated?" To which we may reply, that not only was consecration by the Pope's own hand far more efficacious, but in likewise consecrating

the Queen and her sons, he made the whole dynasty sacred. On the same day, in fact, Stephen forbade the Frankish nobles, under pain of excommunication, to elect any future king "descended from other loins." Thus, not only were the rights of the Merovingians discarded for ever, but also any claim that might be asserted by Carloman's sons.

Besides this, Pope Stephen, in the act of anointing Pippin, also gave him the title of Patrician, a point that has occasioned much dispute, inasmuch as that title was solely conferred by the Emperor on highly illustrious personages, such as Odovacar, Theodoric, and the Exarchs; yet now the Pope bestowed it on Pippin, without one word of protest from the Emperor. It is suggested by some writers that the Emperor may have invested Stephen with the Power of conferring the title, when he sent him to obtain the restitution of the Imperial provinces. But on arriving in France, and grasping the real state of affairs, the Pope might have changed his mind, and on deciding to assume the place of the Empire in Italy, may have conceived that he could also confer, in his own right, the rank of Patrician. The title was simply honorary, but only given, as a rule, to those who already filled lofty dignities. Thus the Pope gave it to King Pippin as the Champion of the Church. In fact, from that moment, the sovereign is styled, indistinctly, either the Patrician, or the Defender of the Church.



## CHAPTER IV

PIPPIN AND THE FRANKS DESCEND INTO ITALY AND  
CONQUER THE LONGOBARDS—DONATION OF THE  
EXARCHATE AND THE PENTAPOLIS TO THE POPE—  
DEATH OF AISTULF—DESIDERIUS MADE KING  
OF THE LONGOBARDS—DISORDERS IN ROME—  
ELECTION AND DEATH OF POPE PAUL I.

DURING the summer of 754, shortly after his consecration, Pippin gathered together his army for the Italian expedition, but without omitting a final attempt to settle the question by peaceful means and even by offering Aistulf a large sum of money. But all was in vain, and the Frankish army received marching orders. The Franks were led by their own King, accompanied by the Pope and his chaplain, the Abbot Fulrad of St. Denis, and other prelates. After passing the Mont Cenis, the vanguard of the Franks encountered the whole of the Longobard army at Le Chiuse, near Susa, and bore the full brunt of its charge. But owing to the narrowness of the gorge, the superior strength of the foe was of no avail, and they were so thoroughly worsted by the small body of Franks, that their defeat was attributed to a miracle.

Thereupon Aistulf had to fly to Pavia, where he was soon besieged and brought to terms. He was to give back Ravenna and several other captured cities,

to swear never again to invade the Roman Duchy, and to give forty hostages as a warranty of his good faith. According to the "Liber Pontificalis" (i. 451), these conditions were to be formally recorded in a *written page*. The territories thus regained were ceded by Pippin to the Pope, who without further delay sought to assume the position of the Emperor in Italy. This step seemed all the more desirable and urgent now that the Emperor had assembled a Synod (753) which condemned the worship of images, and stigmatised it as a new form of idolatry. But when both the Pontiff and Pippin had withdrawn to their own dominions, Aistulf, after having ceded Narni to the Franks, not only violated the agreement by refusing to yield any other place to either power, but marched his army into the Roman Duchy, sacking even the churches on his road. By the 1st January, 756, he was encamped before the walls of Rome, and threatening to put all the citizens to the sword unless they opened the gates and surrendered the Pope's person to him.

Thereupon, Stephen sent one letter after another to Pippin, and hurried off State embassies to carry news of the "massacres and iniquities of the infamous Longobards." The last of these missives was addressed to the King and his sons in the name of St. Peter himself, who after declaring that the injuries inflicted on the population and on all places, sacred and profane, were of a kind to draw tears from stones, ended by invoking the speedy assistance of the Frankish people chosen by God for the defence of the Church. The slightest delay in bringing aid would now be a capital sin, for which God would call them to account.

Pippin was not deaf to the Saint's prayer, and in the spring of 756 again crossed the Alps to punish Aistulf, who, abandoning the siege of Rome, which had already

lasted three months, hurried back to Pavia. Thence he despatched an army against the Franks ; but the latter had passed Mont Cenis and proceeded on their march after again routing the Longobards. During his progress Pippin fell in with an ambassador from Constantinople, who tried to induce him to give back to the Empire all the territory unlawfully appropriated by the Longobard king. But he plainly declared that he had not come to wage war in Italy "for any worldly end or in favour of any mortal man, but for love of St. Peter and for the remission of his sins." After which he lay siege to Pavia and again forced Aistulf to surrender. This time, however, the conqueror naturally exacted harsher terms than in 754. Besides having to furnish a large contribution towards the expenses of the war and an annual tribute, the Longobard was obliged to cede a greater number of cities and deliver fresh hostages. The "*Liber Pontificalis*" gives a list of those cities, which includes Comacchio, Ravenna, and the whole belt of country between the sea and the Apennines from Forlì to Sinigaglia, but does not comprise the Marches of Ancona, Faenza, Bologna, Imola, or Ferrara. The stipulation chiefly concerned the Exarchate and the Pentapolis, but within the shrunken limits to which those provinces had been reduced by Longobard conquests anterior to Aistulf's reign. When the treaty was drawn up, the Abbot Fulrad was sent in person with a sufficient escort of Frankish soldiers to take formal possession of the cities, receive their keys, and even exact fresh hostages as a measure of precaution. The keys were consigned to the Pope in Rome, together with Pippin's Deed of Donation "to St. Peter, to the Holy Roman Republic, and to all succeeding Pontiffs." This written Act of Donation was placed in the Chapel of the "Confession" of St. Peter and, according to the author of

the "Life of Stephen II.," was still there when he was writing that work ("Liber Pontificalis," i. 453). As we shall see, the Popes soon began to demand still greater gifts.

In the same year, 756, a few months after Pippin had returned to France, Aistulf's life ended. He had been a sincere Catholic, had founded churches and convents, and although he had carried off many relics and skeletons of Saints from the Roman Campagna, these thefts were committed for the benefit of the churches of his own realm. But his religious zeal did not prevent him from being continually at strife with the Pope. He was valiant in the field, but—like most of the Longobard sovereigns—pursued a capricious and inconsequent policy, that caused him to lose in the second half of his reign all that he had won in the first. After his death the Longobards were on the verge of civil war regarding the succession. Ratchis left the cloister of Monte Cassino for the purpose of succeeding to his brother's throne, but Desiderius, Duke of Tuscany, was the rival candidate, and by promising large concessions to Rome, obtained the Papal support. So the Pope persuaded Ratchis to resume his monastic life ; wrote a letter to Pippin vaunting the merits of Desiderius and his numerous promises to the Church ; and therefore implored the King of the Franks to show him favour and encourage his good intentions. The Pope also urged Pippin to complete the enterprise he had so happily begun, by obtaining the restitution to St. Peter and the Church of all the territories which, before Aistulf's day, had been comprised in the Pentapolis and the Exarchate. It was impossible to govern that land while long-united populations remained detached from it. And Stephen concluded by saying : " Now that Aistulf, the servant of the Evil One and devourer

of Christian flesh and blood, has ceased to live, and that, thanks to the aid of yourself and your Franks, Desiderius, the good and most merciful, occupies his throne, we beseech you not only to spur him forward on the right road, but also to join with him in the work of freeing us from the pestilent malice of the Greeks, and winning back for us those lands of which the Church has been unlawfully deprived."

The point was plain. New requests were now made, instead of the mere fulfilment of King Pippin's former promises. The Pope insisted on having the Exarchate and Pentapolis, with the addition of all the districts formerly included within their boundaries; while also demanding the restoration of other Church lands, in different parts of the country, which had been wrongly appropriated by Longobards or Byzantines. It seemed a good opportunity for obtaining the fulfilment of all that Desiderius had offered in return for the great services rendered him by Rome in securing him the throne. However, it soon became clear that even this new King of the Longobards had no intention of being true to his word. In fact, after ceding Faenza and Ferrara, he would yield nothing more. But as Stephen II. breathed his last on the 26th April, 757, he was spared the pain of this cruel breach of faith.

The ensuing Papal election was somewhat riotous and began to give indications of the important changes which were about to occur in Rome, owing to the new line of policy adopted by the Popes. For the Donation of Pippin rendered the Head of the Church a temporal ruler. Being the sovereign lord of the Exarchate and Pentapolis, he naturally wished to be likewise the real lord of the Roman Duchy. In fact, from this moment, there was no longer a Duke of Rome, for the Pope insisted on filling that dignitary's place. But this



innovation stirred the wrath of the secular nobles or *Judices de Militia*, who were in command of the army, and they waged the fiercest strife against the ecclesiastical nobility or *Judices de Clero*, who, in virtue of the new authority asserted by the Pope, claimed the right of exercising command over Rome. Fortunately, however, on the 29th May, 757, the brother of the late Pope was raised to the Chair and consecrated under the name of Paul I. Speedily discovering that little reliance could be placed in Desiderius, the Pope turned to Pippin, notifying the fact of his accession in the same style in which it was formerly announced to the Exarch, and asking the King's help against the nobles, who were growing more and more turbulent. Pippin wrote to the latter, exhorting them to yield obedience to the Pope, and the letter still exists in which the *Senatus atque universi populi generalitas* made reply to "the most excellent and victorious Lord Pippin, the chosen of God, King of the Franks and Patrician of Rome." In it they promised obedience to "our common Father," the Pope.

But the worst trouble was the strife with the Longobards, and it was now farther complicated by the changeable temper of Desiderius, which was fated to be the ruin of himself and his kingdom. When the Dukes of Benevento and Spoleto were preparing to discard their allegiance to him and adhere to the Pope and the Franks instead, he tried to maintain his authority by forcibly deposing them at once and replacing them by men he could trust. His next idea was to apply to the Emperor Constantine V. (nicknamed "Copronymos"), promising to assist him to reconquer the Exarchate and Pentapolis. But on perceiving that there was nothing to be gained by this means, since the Emperor was engaged in other enterprises elsewhere, Desiderius

turned once more to the Pope, who, albeit with much reluctance and distrust, consented to grant him audience. Undoubtedly the Pope was in a very awkward position. No assistance could be expected from Pippin, who was waging war with Aquitaine and Saxony, while at the same time he was full of anxiety with regard to the new difficulties raised by the Emperor, inasmuch as the usual political strife with the East was now complicated by the religious conflict touching the worship of images. In fact, Constantine V., profiting by the attitude of the Frankish clergy, who seemed opposed to the Pope on the question of the Trinity as well as of the Images, was trying to arrange a theological agreement with Pippin, by which he hoped to smooth the way for a political treaty of peace. But although King Pippin was willing to discuss the matter, he ended by remaining faithful to the Church of Rome.

It was plainly one of those periods of transition, when the aspect of affairs varies from day to day, so that no one can adhere to any fixed line of policy. Pippin was negotiating with the Emperor while allied with the Pope, who was continually dispatching letters to him imploring the protection of the Franks against the heretic Byzantines, the foes of Holy Church. In his despair, Paul next applied to the Longobards, although they were enemies both of Rome and the Franks, and although both he and his predecessors had been driven to open war with them. Meanwhile, the Emperor tried to come to terms with the Franks, who had robbed him of the Exarchate and Pentapolis by handing them over to the Pope, whom he was now inciting them to attack.

But Paul I. was stricken by death on the 28th June, 767, King Pippin died on the 24th September, 768, and these two events naturally led to another serious change in the world's affairs.

## CHAPTER V

NEW AND MOST ALARMING DISORDERS IN ROME—  
ELECTION OF POPE STEPHEN III.—MARRIAGE  
OF CHARLES, KING OF THE FRANKS, WITH  
DESIDERATA, DAUGHTER OF DESIDERIUS—PER-  
SECUTION OF THE POPE'S ENEMIES—DEATH OF  
STEPHEN III.

THE death of Pope Paul I. proved the signal for another and more violent outbreak of party strife. The consequences were now realised of having abolished the Imperial authority in Rome, the Exarchate and the Pentapolis, without substituting any other authority than that of the Pope, who, being unarmed, was powerless to enforce it. The Roman Duchy, which included about the same territory comprised in the present province of Rome, was first mentioned in the "Liber Pontificalis" (i. 392) in the year 712, whereas the Roman army (*Exercitus Romanus*) was already recorded in 638 and 643 ("Liber Pontificalis," i. 328, 331, and 395, *Note* 28). This army was divided in bands (*Scholæ*), officered by the very powerful secular nobles of the city and Campagna. The Commander-in-chief was always the Duke, who was appointed by the Empire down to 727 ("Liber Pontificalis," i. 404) and elected by the nobles after that date. But in Pippin's time there ceased to be a Duke of Rome, inasmuch as the Pope was then

named the head of the city and dukedom. Then, however, the Pope stood between two fires amid the rival pretensions of the lay nobles, who held command of the army and partly, at least, of the City, and those of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who, being charged with the administration of the Church and all her vast possessions, were certainly no less powerful in Rome than the secular party. So, when Paul I. drew near his end, the hostile factions seemed on the verge of open conflict.

In fact, the Pope was still living when Toto, Duke of Nepi, hurriedly collecting as many followers as he could find in the Campagna, rushed into Rome with his three brothers, Constantine, Passivus, and Paschalis, and forcibly carried the election of the first of the three. But as this Constantine was a layman, the Bishop of Palestrina was compelled at the sword's point, and in spite of the most earnest remonstrances, to successively ordain this strange candidate as cleric, sub-deacon, and deacon, after which Constantine was proclaimed Pope the same day, 28th of June, 767. He only occupied the Papal Chair for thirteen months, which were filled with riot and bloodshed, for the ecclesiastical nobles whom he had stripped of many profitable offices made armed protest against the irregularity of his election. It would have been natural for this party to side with the Franks, but knowing that Pippin had too many wars on his hands to afford any help at this juncture, they were obliged to have recourse to the Longobards, and speedily obtained favour with Desiderius. So, with the consent of the Longobard king, Christopher, *Primicerius* of the Papal Chancery, and his son Sergius, who was *Secundicerius*, were enabled to collect troops in the Duchy of Spoleto, and on the 29th of July, 768, appeared before the San Pancrazio Gate and came to blows with their adversaries, the secular nobles. The latter were worsted, having

traitors in their midst, who, when the battle seemed going well for their party, treacherously attacked their own comrades from behind, and thus compassed their defeat. The Pope's brother, Passivus, and a few faithful followers sought safety in the Lateran, but were all seized and imprisoned. Then a Longobard priest named Waldipert, who had given assistance to the victors, collected an armed mob of friends and caused a certain priest named Philip to be elected Pope. This man was hurriedly consecrated in the Lateran, mounted the Chair of St. Peter, and bestowed his benediction on the people. But this election being solely advantageous to the Longobard faction, was displeasing to the Roman aristocracy, who had only raised the standard of revolt in order to secure the predominance of their own party. Accordingly, they soon compelled Philip to renounce his high dignity, and gathering all their adherents, the army, people, and clergy, procured a new election, by which Stephen III., who had been the trusted friend of Paul I., was raised to the Papal throne (1st of August, 768).

But although the validity of this fresh election was ultimately recognised, it failed to restore the public peace, for, previously to the consecration of the new Pontiff (on the 7th of August), the victorious nobles were determined to take revenge for the nomination of Constantine. Accordingly, they fell upon some of the latter's adherents, and, in the barbarous Byzantine fashion, tore out their eyes and tongues. The excited mob afterwards broke into the house in which the practically deposed Pope was confined, and, overwhelming him with insults, dragged him forth, and, placing him on a horse with a woman's saddle, conducted him to a monastery prison. On the 6th of August he was led thence to the Lateran Basilica, where the assembled bishops formally degraded him, by tearing the pallium from his neck and stripping



from his feet the pontifical sandals. Soon afterwards his foes again dragged him from the monastery, tore out his eyes, and left him stretched half dead in the road. Others suffered the same fate. Nor was the priest Waldipert spared, for knowing that he had secured the election of Philip, the other deposed Pope, the Romans feared that he might now concert some plan of vengeance with his Longobard comrades. For this reason many who had been of his party shortly before now hunted him down with murderous intent. He fled to St. Mary of the Martyrs (the Pantheon), and when his foes invaded the sanctuary clung desperately to the holy images in the hope of thus saving his life. But he was brutally dragged through the streets to the Lateran Field, where his eyes were torn out, and he died in a short time from gangrene of the sockets. Stephen III. made no attempt to prevent these atrocious deeds, and can hardly be excused by the fact that, with the best will in the world, he might have found it very difficult to stop them.

In April, 769, a Synod was convened in Rome to arrange the necessary measures for the prevention of scandalous scenes at future elections, and twelve Frankish bishops also attended the assembly. But the proceedings of this Synod were far from pacific. The wretched ex-Pope Constantine, who was already blinded, *jam extra oculos*, was called upon to explain how, being a layman, he should have dared to allow himself to be chosen Pope. He replied by declaring that he had been forced to yield to the will of the mob, and asked pardon for his sins. But the following day, when he tried to extenuate his guilt by remarking that, before his time, laymen had been made bishops at Ravenna and Naples, all the members of the Synod were stirred to the wildest indignation. They refused to hear another word from him, and ordered the attendants to beat him and drive him from their presence.

The decree by which his election had been proclaimed and the documents of his pontificate were then burned. Stephen III., the bishops, priests, and all the citizens present in the church knelt in prayer, doing penitence for having tolerated a Pope so irregularly elected and for having accepted the sacrament from his hands. Also, the election of any layman to the Papal Chair was prohibited under pain of Anathema. It was further decreed that no one who was not a cardinal-deacon or priest should ever be elected Pope, also that none should come armed to the spot where the election took place, and that in the future the right of electing the Pope was to be limited to cardinals, primates of the Church, and the clergy of Rome. Neither the people nor the army were to have any voice in the matter, but merely the right of acclaiming the Pope when elected.

The deplorable condition of things in the Eternal City now became increasingly critical owing to the aspect of affairs abroad. For, on the death of King Pippin, the Frankish realm had been divided between his two sons, Charles and Carloman, who were soon at serious odds. Their quarrels robbed the Pope of all hope of receiving help from the Franks, and consequently encouraged the daring of the Roman nobles in general, and particularly that of Christopher and Sergius. These men had deposed Constantine and Philip in turn; and having carried the election of Stephen III., considered themselves entitled to tyrannise over him, and be absolute masters in every way. In the struggle between Carloman and Charles they sided with the former, gaining his favour in despite of the Pope, who was disgusted by their arrogance. Thus the disputes of the two Frankish princes caused division even in Italy, for whoever declared himself opposed to either was immediately taken into favour by the other. Consequently party strife was fed throughout the peninsula, and especially

in Rome and Ravenna. In the latter city a struggle was going on between the various aspirants to the episcopal see, who were only agreed on the point of rendering the bishopric more and more independent of the Pope, heedless of the fact that the Exarchate had been ceded outright to the latter by Pippin.

Meanwhile, the widowed Queen Bertha was striving her best to bring about a reconciliation between her sons, the two kings of the Franks. To this end she came to Italy for the purpose of allying them by marriage with the Longobards. Her efforts led to the conclusion of a match between Charles and Desiderata, the daughter of King Desiderius. There was also some parleying about another Longobard bride for Carloman. On hearing of these negotiations the Pope fell into the wildest fit of rage, foreseeing that any tie of kindred between Longobards and Franks would cause the overthrow of all his long-cherished schemes and most seriously endanger the interests of the Church. In fact, the letter he addressed to the two brothers upon the subject was conceived in such violent terms that, although it is comprised in the Carolingian Codex, some writers dispute its authenticity. He stigmatised as "diabolic" any alliance formed between "the most noble Frankish race and the iniquitous Longobard tribe." He appeared to be under the impression that both brothers were already married men, and that consequently the new marriages proposed would be mere acts of concubinage. He wound up by saying: "We have laid this our letter of admonition on the tomb of St. Peter, and having celebrated Mass over it, now dispatch it from this place with tears in our eyes."

Charles, however, had no lawful wife, so there was no obstacle to his union with Desiderata; the marriage was duly performed; and the Pope was forced to accept the accomplished fact. What was the use of angering

Charles and Desiderata? Besides, Christopher and Sergius were becoming more and more insupportable; they were treating with Carloman, and the latter had sent his ambassador, Dodo, to them in Rome, together with a few soldiers, so that they were more audacious and arrogant than before.

Besides, since the deposition of Philip and the murder of Walpirt, these men had naturally become enemies of the Longobards, and therefore Queen Bertha was enabled to re-establish friendly relations between the Pope and King Desiderius, who, according to his wont, was again lavish of promises.

Under the pretext of making a religious pilgrimage, the Longobard king now journeyed towards Rome with a considerable following of soldiers, for the purpose of meeting the Pope in St. Peter's and assisting him to dispose of Christopher and Sergius, whose attitude was more threatening than ever. But these nobles were too much on the alert to be caught unawares (771). They had already summoned their adherents from the Campagna, called friendly citizens to arms, and incorporated them with the small force of Frankish soldiers brought to Rome by Carloman's enemy, Dodo. Accordingly, all was prepared for the revolt by the time Desiderius and the Pope met in conference at St. Peter's. But Stephen III. had also been on the watch, and entrusted his defence to one of the superiors of the Curia, the Chamberlain or *Cubicularius* Paul, nicknamed Afiarta, a man of much daring. So, the moment the Pope issued from St. Peter's to return to the Lateran, Paul promptly called the people to arms and started a riot. Thereupon, Christopher and Sergius rushed to the Lateran with all their adherents and demanded the surrender of the Chamberlain. But, to the detriment of their own cause, their turbulent followers, having broken into the palace, could not abstain from

sacking it, and rushed, sword in hand, to the Basilica, where the Pope had sought refuge. What followed next is not precisely known. Stephen said in one of his letters that he was in danger of being killed ; but the day after he went with Afiarta and a strong escort of armed men to another interview with Desiderius at St. Peter's. It seems certain, however, that Christopher and Sergius did no violence to the Pope, either because they shrank from assaulting the visible Head of the Church in the Lord's temple, or because their followers deserted them at that moment, or, still more probably, because Afiarta appeared in time to defeat their purpose. At any rate, it is certain that after Stephen had gone off to St. Peter's the following morning, the two rebels were seized by the defenders of the Pope, and the latter gave orders that they were to be detained in the Basilica to a late hour of the night, when it would be easier, he said, under cover of darkness, for the Chamberlain to escort them safely back to the city. But, on the contrary, just as they reached the gate, a band of ruffians, lurking in the shadow of the wall, suddenly attacked the wretched men and plucked out their eyes. Christopher was dragged to the Monastery of St. Agatha, and died there three days later. Sergius was incarcerated in the Lateran but disappeared after a time.

These cruel acts of vengeance had been committed at the secret instigation of Desiderius, who now returned to Pavia, but it is hard to believe that the Pope had no share in them.

Such was the end of the two veteran chiefs of the ecclesiastical lords, who first joined with the Longobards and afterwards betrayed them. But Pope Stephen, being always weak and changeable, only escaped from one tyranny to fall under another. The Chamberlain Afiarta, backed by the Longobard faction, now played the tyrant in Rome, to the vast disgust of the Franks. Carloman



indeed had favoured Christopher and Sergius ; but even his brother Charles must have looked askance at the triumph of the Longobards in Rome. The Pope tried to exculpate himself in the eyes of Queen Bertha and her sons by laying all the blame on the ambassador Dodo, who, so he declared, " had sided with the diabolical promoters of a riot that had seriously endangered his (the Pope's) life in the Lateran. The cruelties committed upon Christopher and Sergius on their way to the city had been done entirely against his will, by certain common malefactors, who burst so unexpectedly from their hiding-places, that his own men arrived too late to prevent the crime." The Pope concluded his letter with eulogies on Desiderius, who, he declared, had saved his life, and was already beginning to fulfil his pledge of restoring the usurped territory. But none of this was true, as was soon ascertained.

The general aspect of affairs was now considerably changed, both in Italy and abroad. Charles, who had always been hostile to the Franks, presently repudiated his wife Desiderata and sent her back to her father, an act which necessarily widened the breach between the two nations. On the 4th of December, 771, Carloman died, leaving a son only twelve months old ; so the nobles elected Charles as his brother's successor, in order that the kingdom should gain strength by being united under his rule. Again changing his policy, the Pope drew apart from Desiderius—whose promises had not been fulfilled—and adopted friendlier relations with Charles. He greatly resented the conduct of the Longobard king, for on reminding him of the pledges he had given, the latter merely replied that the Pope should rather feel satisfaction and gratitude for all benefits received, inasmuch as he owed his deliverance from the tyranny of Christopher and Sergius entirely to him. But all these excitements and

anxious vicissitudes seriously disturbed the weak mind of the Pope, whose health was also impaired by the first attacks of a mortal disease. Then his Chamberlain, Afiarta, gave him no peace. This personage was spinning his intrigues in order to twist the coming election to his own advantage, and therefore arbitrarily banished or imprisoned all the nobles who were adverse to himself and his party. Stephen finally died about the 1st of February, 772, and this event produced other important changes in Roman and Italian affairs.

## CHAPTER VI

THE ELECTION OF ADRIAN I. — THE CONDEMNATION AND DEATH OF AFIARTA — CHARLES, KING OF THE FRANKS MAKES A DESCENT UPON ITALY — DEFEAT OF THE LONGOBARDS AND SIEGE OF PAVIA — CHARLES ENTERS ROME AND SPENDS EASTER THERE IN 774

THE chamberlain Afiarta managed to arrange that the Papal election should proceed rapidly and without any disturbance, but failed to ensure the choice of a Pope suited to his designs. In fact, Adrian I. (772-95), the new occupant of the Chair, was a man of sincere religious faith and most resolute character, who, unlike his predecessor, never hesitated about anything. In fact, when the ambassadors of Desiderius appeared before him making the usual lavish promises in their master's name, he replied that it was impossible to believe in a king who had constantly deceived the late Pope. Nevertheless, as they continued to urge their professions, and Adrian did not wish to fail in ordinary courtesy and expediency, he dispatched Stephen the Notary and Paul Afiarta on an embassy to Pavia. But on reaching Perugia, their journey was arrested by the news that Desiderius had already changed his mind, and that having taken possession of Faenza, Ferrara, and Comacchio, his troops were freely scouring the Exarchate and actually threatening Ravenna,

whence the Archbishop was appealing to the Pope for help. Meanwhile, Carloman's widow had sought refuge with her children at the Court of Desiderius, who, from hatred to Charles, had taken her under his protection, and prayed the Pope to do the same and even bestow consecration on her sons. But Adrian "showed himself as hard as adamant," and actually sent a second embassy to Pavia to heap fresh reproofs on the Longobard monarch and investigate his intentions more thoroughly.

During the course of these events, Afiarta, having realised the depth of the Pope's aversion for himself and the Longobards, attempted to come to terms with Desiderius. The latter was anxious to obtain an interview with Adrian, hoping by fresh wiles to bend him to his own uses; accordingly Afiarta had promised to bring the Pope to him, "even were it necessary to drag him there with a rope round his throat." However, he had reckoned without his host, for he had barely reached Ravenna before he was seized by hirelings of the Archbishop of Ravenna in pursuance of a special order from the Pope. For Adrian, being determined to put an end to the insolent despotism wielded by Paul Afiarta had recalled nearly all the men the latter had sent into banishment, and released those who had been thrown into prison. He likewise ordered a careful investigation as to the disappearance of Sergius. It was then discovered that a week after the death of Pope Stephen, the Chamberlain and others had caused the miserable captive to be brought secretly by night to the Esquiline Hill, where they had murdered and buried him near the Arch of Gallienus. In fact, when the corpse was exhumed it still showed traces of injuries inflicted, and had a halter round its neck. When the crime was discovered some of the accomplices escaped punishment by flight, and others were exiled. Documentary reports of the trial were

forwarded to Ravenna, in order that Afiarta might be brought to judgment and, if guilty, sentenced to the same punishment. But the Archbishop being a warm adherent of the Franks, and consequently still more devoted to the Pope as the opponent of Afiarta and the Longobards, caused the Chamberlain to be condemned to death, and promptly had him executed. The Pope was much vexed by this; for, being sure of his own strength of purpose, he wished to avoid all appearance of excessive rigour.

In any case, the Longobard faction in Rome was thoroughly disheartened and broken up by the loss of its leader, the Chamberlain. Desiderius hurled fierce threats at the Pope on the latter's refusal to make terms with him, and shortly afterwards occupied the Exarchate, invaded the Pentapolis, and between the end of 772 and the first weeks of 773 was already nearing the frontier of the Roman Duchy. But Adrian was already on the alert, and quickly prepared for defence by gathering troops from the Campagna, the provinces, and the towns. About the same time he wrote to implore the aid of King Charles, who was also pressed to make a descent into Italy by certain Longobard chiefs who were hostile to Desiderius. Very soon, in fact, a Frankish embassy arrived in Rome to announce that Charles had decided to pass the Alps. Accordingly, when Desiderius entered Viterbo, envoys came to him from the exultant Pope, commanding him to withdraw under penalty of Anathema. And learning that the Franks were really on the march, the Longobard king beat a retreat. Following the method King Pippin had employed with Aistulf before deciding the question by force of arms, Charles likewise offered peaceful terms to Desiderius, undertaking to give him 14,000 gold *solidi* if he restored the promised territories to the Pope. But no agreement could be arranged. Accordingly, in the spring of 773, the Franks



again marched into Italy with two separate armies. The one commanded by Bernard, the son of Charles Martel and uncle of King Charles, crossed by Mons Jovis (now the Great St. Bernard). The other advanced by the Mont Cenis, and was led by the King in person, who, on reaching the Chiusa of San Michele, once more tried to bring Desiderius to terms by gentle means. But the attempt failed, and he was forced to give battle. The real history of this episode is so intermixed with legendary accounts that it is not easy to disentangle fact from fiction. It is related that the pass over the Alps was so firmly barricaded by a strong wall which the Longobards had built as a defence, that the Franks were seized with dismay and on the point of retreating, when, by the will of God, the enemy suddenly fled in a wild panic. Another legend relates that their flight was caused by the treachery of certain Longobard leaders. A third version has it that when King Charles found the road hopelessly blocked, a Longobard minstrel sought his presence and offered to reveal a secret track by which the army could pass unseen. Thus the Franks made their way down into the valley, and surprising their foes in the rear, thoroughly routed them. Then when the minstrel was asked to name his reward he climbed to the top of a hill and, sounding his horn, asked that all the land should be his where his blast was heard. And the boon was granted. Leaving these and other traditions aside, all we can say is that a battle took place between the Franks and Longobards, that it was won by the Franks, and that no details of it are known. It would appear that while King Charles was making a frontal attack on the Longobards, Bernard's army had rapidly advanced by an unexpected route, and outflanking them took them in the rear and drove them to precipitous flight. Desiderius then sought safety within the walls of Pavia, while Adelchis, his son, shut

himself up in Verona, where Carloman's widow, Gerberga, had already taken refuge with her children.

Charles quickly pushed forward with his army, occupying various important towns, including Turin and Milan. He next besieged Pavia, which was able to hold out for a long time. The object of the war was no longer confined, as in Pippin's day, to obtaining the restitution of Church territory. Charles had no intention of coming to terms with the foe, but was determined to wage a war of extermination, to annihilate the power of the Longobards, and seize the whole of their kingdom. Foreseeing that the regularly conducted siege of Pavia would drag on for some time, he caused his wife Hildegard to come to him from France, made various expeditions in different directions, and occupied several cities, which surrendered without a blow. Verona was one of these cities; so Gerberga and her children fell into his hands, and ended their days in a convent. But Adelchis contrived to make his escape, and after tarrying some time at Salerno, went off to Constantinople.

When six months had elapsed without any sign of the siege of Pavia being brought to an end, Charles decided to go on to Rome that year (774) and gratify the desire, common to all believers at the time, of celebrating Easter, which fell on the 2nd of April, in the capital of the Christian world. The King would likewise find his opportunity in Rome of consulting with the Pope on all the great political questions which were bound to arise from the present war. For instance, when he should have conquered the Longobard kingdom, what was he to do with it? Decidedly, it must not be restored to the Empire, for Adrian I. would be opposed to that measure, nor had he come to Italy for any such purpose. Yet he had no desire to hand it all over to the Church, nor could the Pope be in a position to rule it, having no

standing army. On the other hand, to keep the whole kingdom for himself would be a betrayal of his pledges to the Pope, with whom he wished to live in harmony ; for whose sake and in whose cause he had descended into Italy and undertaken the war. Therefore it was necessary to concert measures with the Pope, and for this reason also no better moment could be chosen for his journey to Rome.

What had been the long-cherished aim of the Popes, and the aim still more warmly cherished by Adrian now that the Longobard kingdom was nearing its fall, is sufficiently well explained in their letters and by the so-called Donation of Constantine, which, although known to be a forged document, compiled precisely at this time by some member of the Curia, is of high historical value, in that it clearly betrays the ambitious aims which the Church had steadily kept in view for a long period. This Donation which now sprung upon the world, and was very soon quoted by the Popes as an authentic document, set forth how the Emperor, after conferring the Palace of the Lateran on the Pope, together with the highest honours of the Empire, after formally acknowledging the supremacy of the Church, and recognising the Senatorial rank of prelates and cardinals, made cession of "the city of Rome, of all the places, provinces, and cities of Italy to the most blessed Pope Sylvester and his successors." However vague and fantastic these concessions may seem to be, they most clearly show that the Popes aspired to take the position in Italy that the Empire was obliged to resign ; and the evidence of facts proves that Adrian I. was no longer satisfied with the sole acquisition of those territories which had been taken from the Empire by Pippin. At this very moment the men of Spoleto—in order to escape becoming subject to King Charles—had come to Rome to make act of submission to the Pope by

swearing allegiance to him, and in sign thereof—according to the custom of the time—had cut their hair and shaven off their beards. The Pope had willingly accepted their homage, and, as though already their lawful over-lord, had formally recognised the new Duke they had chosen. Osimo, Fermo, Ancona, and Città di Castello, all followed the example of Spoleto. Nevertheless, that Pope Adrian seriously thought of being able to succeed to the imperial power in Italy and to the Longobard kingdom can scarcely be believed. Surely he must have understood that even if given possession of the whole peninsula, he would not have been able to rule it? Accordingly, the idea that presented itself to Charles as more practical and less difficult to carry into execution, was that of forming a Frankish realm in Lombardy and Liguria, ceding the Exarchate and Pentapolis to the Pope, in addition to the Roman Duchy, and likewise handing over to him in other parts of Italy all lands and properties over which the Church could prove to have had genuine patrimonial rights. This plan, however, had not yet assumed a very definite shape in any one's mind; all was still uncertain and open to discussion, and therefore might be satisfactorily mooted in Rome.

Near the Lake of Bracciano, at thirty miles from the city, Charles was met by the first dignitaries sent to welcome him by the Pope. Then, at one mile from the gates the trained militia, or *Scholæ*, students with olive-branches, and a multitude of people singing hymns and bearing huge crosses, came out to greet him with all the ceremony formerly employed in receiving the Exarch. The moment Charles saw them advancing he sprang from his horse and accompanied them on foot to St. Peter's. That ancient church, traditionally supposed to have been erected by Constantine, was very different from and more beautiful than the present cathedral, owing

to the truly original character of its architecture. It stood outside the walls, for in those days the Vatican quarter formed a species of suburb to the city. It was a vast cruciform Basilica with five naves, and the central one terminated in a semicircular apse. The façade opened on a spacious, cloistered courtyard, that was called St. Peter's Paradise. The floor of both the church and the court was raised a good many feet above the level of the outer square. It was approached by a flight of steps of the same width as the façade or outer wall. The ninety-six columns of the church, as well as the bricks of which the walls and arches were built, had been taken from Nero's amphitheatre close by, and from other pagan edifices ; so that there were carvings, capitals, and pillars of many different styles. This huge Christian fane, composed of fragments of heathen temples, seemed to flash light from afar, for the roof was covered with plates of gilded bronze, also appropriated from the shrines of Rome's ancient gods. The richly-coloured mosaics and paintings in the interior gave this church a curiously severe and solemn character, far more in harmony with religious feeling than the modern St. Peter's, which rather resembles an immense art-gallery. There were also many statues of marble and bronze, some of which had been likewise taken from pagan temples and adapted to Christian uses. There were other decorations of rich brocades, embroidered stuffs, and sheets of silver and gold. In the centre of the transept stood the Apostle's "Confession," overlaid with plates of silver, and canopied by a miniature dome supported on six twisted columns of onyx, wherein a hundred lamps and candles perpetually blazed. Every day the building was thronged with thousands of believers of either sex, of all ages and degrees, who flocked from all parts of the earth to seek remission for their sins. It was a unique house of prayer,



and could be truly named the religious centre of the universe.

The Pope, who had been awaiting the arrival of the King since early morning, received him at St. Peter's, standing erect among his clergy at the head of the stairs fronting the entrances, and on beholding him there Charles knelt down at the foot of the flight, and mounting it on his knees kissed every step in turn. As he reached the entrance the Pope saluted him with a kiss, and, taking his hand, led him across the court and up the nave to the "Confession." Thereupon priests and choir chanted the verse, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." That same day, Holy Saturday, the 1st of April, Pope and King, attended by Frankish and Roman nobles, descended to the tomb of St. Peter in the "Confession," and made oath of reciprocal fidelity. The ceremony concluded, they went to St. John Lateran, where the King witnessed the performance of the baptismal rite by the Pope. The next day being Easter Sunday, Charles attended the Pope's High Mass in St. Maria Maggiore. On the third day and first Easter holiday a great banquet was held, and on Tuesday, the fourth morning, a service was celebrated in St. Peter's, and praises of the King were intermixed with those of the Saint. On the fifth day there was a function in St. Paul's.

But the sixth day of the royal visit, the 6th of April and fourth Easter festival, was the most important of all. The Pope marched from the city in solemn procession, and again escorted Charles to St. Peter's, earnestly exhorting him to thoroughly fulfil all the promises originally made by King Pippin and confirmed by himself. Then, according to the "*Liber Pontificalis*," which is almost our sole authority on this point, Charles had the text read aloud to him of the Donation made by Pippin at

Quierzy, and then the Act was solemnly renewed and ratified by himself and his nobles. Afterwards he ordered it to be transcribed by his chaplain and notary, again pledging his word to cede the territories specified therein, and even causing their boundaries to be more precisely indicated, as given in the account from which we quote. This now vanished Act of Donation, after being signed by the King, his bishops, abbots, dukes, and counts, was placed on the altar at St. Peter's, then deposited for a while in the Holy Confession, and finally handed over to the Pope, with a sworn promise of observing its terms. A second copy, written by the same notary, Etherius, was, for greater security, solemnly deposited in the "Confession" on the body of St. Peter, and under the Gospels which believers kissed, while a third copy was retained by the King. This narrative is taken from the biography of Adrian I. in the "*Liber Pontificalis*," and the author of the work states that he had seen the Act of Donation with his own eyes. Nevertheless, there has been endless controversy regarding the very existence of the Act, and the whole narrative of the circumstances has been the subject of countless disputes, given rise to a whole library of controversies, and caused charges of forgery, interpolation, and so on, to be freely bandied about. But the final result of the prolonged contest has been that, nowadays, the author of Adrian's Life is believed to have told the truth, the points still disputed mainly bearing on the interpretation of his text.

Therefore, according to the author of the "*Liber Pontificalis*," the Act of Donation bestowed the Exarchate on the Pope, with all the additional territory formerly comprised within its boundaries. No direct mention was made of the Pentapolis, but there is reason to believe that it was held to be included in the gift; while the Duchies of Spoleto and Benevento, the whole of Tuscany, Corsica, Venetia,

and Istria were specifically added to it. Thus the new kingdom that Charles proposed to keep for himself would have been reduced to very narrow limits in Northern Italy, while the Pope would have been master of nearly all Central and Southern Italy, and also of a portion of the Northern Provinces. But it cannot be denied that, excepting in the case of the Roman Duchy, the Exarchates and Pentapolis, the boundaries of all other territories ceded to the Pope were very loosely determined. So we are driven to conclude that either it was intended to refer solely to patrimonial estates claimed by the Church in other provinces, and to which her right could be proved on documentary evidence, or that even were it then intended to allow the Church absolute sovereignty over them, the pledges to that effect were certainly disregarded. This may have occurred, without any change of purpose or wilful deceit on the King's part, but solely because he became speedily convinced of the Pope's inability to defend even the territories already ceded to him. At any rate, it would have been extremely difficult for Charles, whatever he may have wished, to decide in 774 precisely how much land he would be enabled to give to the Pope. On the one hand, Adrian's pretensions were daily increasing; and on the other, it was a question of ceding territory which had still to be conquered. The state of uncertainty that naturally ensued opened the door to prolonged discussions, which could only be decided by the final result of the war.

After a flying visit to Rome, at the end of May or beginning of June, King Charles went back to Pavia, which was now forced to surrender, after holding out for nearly eight months. At this point the web of history is again interwoven with legendary tales. It is said that a daughter of Desiderius, being enamoured of Charles, managed to send him a letter by shooting it across the Ticino, tied to

some projectile, and that the reply she received from the King served to greatly intensify her passion. So she secretly gained possession of the keys of the city, which were always hung by her father's bedside, and opened the gates to the besiegers one night. But in hurrying forth to meet King Charles she was thrown down and trampled to death by the Frankish cavalry in their headlong advance. We may glean from this fable that internal dissension, as well as hunger and disease, forced the Longobards to surrender their besieged capital. King Desiderius was carried off to France with his wife and daughter, and ended his days there as a humble monk. The valiant Adelchis had already escaped to Constantinople after the fall of Verona, an event that, according to some writers, was subsequent to that of Pavia. The other Longobard cities of Northern and Central Italy all yielded in turn. Accordingly, it may be said that the fall of Pavia caused the overthrow of the Longobard kingdom, which had lasted for more than two hundred years.

## CHAPTER VII

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FRANKISH KINGDOM IN ITALY  
—CONSPIRACIES AND REVOLTS AGAINST THE POPE  
WHO APPLIES TO CHARLES FOR HELP—THE KING  
OF THE FRANKS RETURNS TO ITALY AND CELE-  
BRATES THE EASTER OF 781 IN ROME

CHARLES was scarcely thirty-two years of age and, having secured his vast kingdom and still vaster extent of conquered territory from attack on every side, now assumed the titles of King of the Franks, King of the Longobards, and Roman Patrician. In all public documents his Chancery began to reckon the years of his reign from the capture of Pavia, and the same plan was adopted even by private individuals, while the name of the Emperor of the East was left utterly unrecorded. The new Frankish realm in Upper Italy extended beyond the Isonzo to Istria ; but the supremacy of Charles virtually extended over the whole of Central Italy.

After swearing fealty to the Pope, the Dukedom of Spoleto renounced its allegiance and made submission to Charles. But Arichis, the Duke of Benevento, still continued to play the part of an independent sovereign ; while the Duke of Friuli had very reluctantly sworn submission and was preparing to revolt at the first opportunity. In any case, Charles' new title of Roman Patrician was no longer an honorary one, and began to



assume a definite value, in that the King was now the real protector and defender of the Church. In fact, even the provinces more explicitly appertaining to the Church hastened to swear fealty to Charles. Apparently he had reserved the right of final decision in all death sentences, and abolished the right of appeal to ecclesiastical courts; since, on more than one occasion, Charles is found taking his seat *pro tribunali* and pronouncing judgment even in the city of Rome. But he showed great tact by never assuming the title of King of Italy, only styling himself King of the Longobards; and also by refusing to incorporate with France the portion of Italy subject to his sway. For he erected his Italian dominions into a separate province that almost attained to the condition of a self-governing kingdom, inasmuch as he left all old institutions and even old dukedoms intact; merely substituting in certain places a count for a duke. But he speedily organised a new method of administration at Pavia, by appropriating to his own use all the Longobard Crown lands, and giving part of them to certain French convents, a measure that might be styled a preliminary to assimilation.

All of a sudden King Charles was summoned across the Alps in order to put down a revolt of the Saxons, whom he routed in a pitched battle during the year 775, after which he returned to Italy, as we shall shortly see, in order to reduce the Duke of Friuli to submission, but was again called over the mountains to resume the Saxon war, which seemed likely to go on indefinitely. But, although both Saxons and Alamanni kept up a very protracted and most stubborn resistance, both, being of more homogeneous stock, finally assimilated with the Franks. This could never be the case with the Italians, although they opposed a much feebler resistance and were more easily ruled. Having lived together for two cen-

turies, Longobards and Romans had been welded into one nation ; hence both races showed a general and persistent repugnance for the Franks, while among the ruling class in general and the Dukes in particular this aversion was most strongly marked. The same antipathy prevailed in the regions still held by the Byzantines, who, being greatly enraged by the losses they had suffered at the hands of the Franks, did their utmost to incite the whole mass of the people to hate them in an equal degree. All this produced serious disturbances, which unavoidably led to other troubles of a different but no less serious kind.

We have already had occasion to see that the Archbishops of Ravenna frequently started many quarrels and conflicts with Rome ; and these burst out again with increased fury during the present state of public disorder. The Archbishop Leo had obtained his high office in 771, having crushed his rival competitor by the aid of King Charles and the partiality of the Pope, to whom he then professed submission. Now, however, as the times had changed, he began to oppose the will of the Head of the Church. For Ravenna having ceased to be subject to Byzantine rule, Leo considered that the Archbishop was entitled to exercise no less authority in his own diocese than the Pope assumed in Rome. He founded his argument not only on the exceptional position always enjoyed by the episcopal centre of the Exarchate, but likewise on the Pragmatic Sanction, whereby bishops were entitled to appoint judges with full executive powers. Had not Adrian I. appealed to him when Paulus Afiarta was to be tried ? and had not he, Leo, caused the death sentence to be executed without even consulting the Pope ?

The prerogatives conferred on bishops by the Emperor could not be impaired by the Donation made

by Charles to the Bishop of Rome ; neither could they be cancelled by the authority invested in the King as Patrician of Rome. The changes which had ensued had been made in the name of the Roman people, which could not be held superior to that of the Emperor. This would appear to have been Archbishop Leo's line of reasoning ; and it may be undoubtedly affirmed that his conduct was guided by these ideas. Therefore he sought to assume (and from identical motives) the same position in the Exarchate and Pentapolis that had been assumed by the Pope in the territories evacuated by the Empire. Leo certainly encountered strong opposition in the Pentapolis, which declared in favour of the Pope ; but within the boundaries of the Exarchate he successfully appointed officials of his own nomination and ousted those sent from Rome. The Archbishop had had the shrewdness to show great aversion to the Longobards and great friendliness for the Franks, so naturally Charles could not be hostile to him. In fact, this state of things was of service to the King by imposing some little check on the Pope's ever-growing ambition.

Adrian I. was naturally much angered by all this, and complained to Charles about it, urging him to come back to Italy, re-establish the power of the Church there, and fulfil his former promises. In reciting his grievances, he told him of a plot against the Franks that had been hatched in Italy in concert with Constantinople. He considerably exaggerated whatever indirect share might have been taken in it by the Archbishop of Ravenna, who, as we have already noted, was a declared friend of the Franks, and he likewise exaggerated the complicity of the Dukes of Benevento and Spoleto, who were again alienated from him. Adrian stated, among other things, that a letter from the Patriarch of Grado, informing him of the conspiracy, had reached his hands with broken seals,

because the Archbishop had opened it in order to betray its contents to the Dukes—his accomplices. The fact was that several Longobard Dukes were really hatching a plot against the Franks and the Pope. It was alleged by some that Hrodgard, the Duke of Friuli, coveted Desiderius's crown, and by others that the Longobards wished to renew the interregnum that had formerly occurred after the murder of King Cleph. It was also added that a fleet, commanded by Adelchis, had already sailed from Constantinople to secure the success of the scheme. It is quite possible that Archbishop Leo should favour a plot against the Pope, with whom he was at strife; but it is incredible that he should have co-operated in any attempt to drive out his friends the Franks, or reconstitute the Longobard rule, to which he was openly opposed. Nevertheless, it appears certain that a meeting had been held at Spoleto for the purpose of arranging the very plot of which the Pope gave so high-coloured a version to King Charles.

But that monarch took the matter very calmly, and tried, first of all, to detach the Dukes of Spoleto and Benevento from their fellow-conspirators by promising them a larger measure of independence. In addition to this, the news received in Italy in February, 776, of the death of Emperor Copronymos deprived the conspirators of the chief support upon which they relied. Meanwhile Charles, being free from the cares of the Saxon war, marched a small force towards Italy, arrived there with lightning speed, attacked Hrodgard only, quickly defeated him in battle, and apparently killed him. Thus the King became master of Friuli, for, though some resistance was offered at Treviso, it was so easily disposed of that he celebrated the Easter Festival (April 14, 776) in that city. On his first descent into Italy he had shown remarkable leniency. Now, however, being greatly

angered by the plot against him, he was sternly severe. Many persons were reduced to poverty by the confiscation of their lands, and even those who escaped imprisonment became homeless wanderers. One of the men thrown into prison was a brother of the historian Paulus Diaconus. So the latter, after having recorded the generous acts of the King on first coming to Italy, was now driven to lament the cruel and prolonged captivity of his own brother, whose wife and children were stripped of their all and went about in rags begging their daily bread. Charles now proceeded to effect, on a larger scale than before, the substitution of counts in place of dukes as rulers of Italian cities. The former, being less powerful than the latter, were in greater subordination to himself, their over-lord, and consequently more obedient to his commands. For the better defence of the kingdom, he had adopted the plan of establishing Marches on the borders, each March consisting of several counties, which he entrusted to "Counts of the Marches," who were therefore quite as powerful as dukes, and he now employed the same method in Friuli. After this, being obliged to continue the Saxon war, he quitted Italy without visiting the Pope, towards whom his friendship seemed to have cooled, while, on the other hand, he showed some, at least, apparent favour to the Archbishop of Ravenna. Having conquered the Saxons in spite of their fierce resistance, Charles was next compelled to hasten to Spain, and, passing the Pyrenees, made war on the Saracens, captured Pampeluna, and pushed on to Saragossa. But then he was forced to hurry back again in order to quell another revolt in Saxony. On the march from Spain, his rear-guard was hotly attacked by the Basques, and literally annihilated in the famous rout at Roncesvalle (778), in which the best part of the Frankish Paladins were killed, including the mighty Orlando,



whose valour is so highly vaunted in poems of chivalry. Nevertheless, Charles pursued his retreat to his own country, and after again crushing the Saxons in 779, crossed the Alps for the third time, as the state of things in Italy imperatively demanded his presence.

The Archbishop of Ravenna was no longer living, but the opposition to the Pope had not ceased altogether, for the Dukes of Spoleto and Benevento showed increasing hostility to him. These two potentates gave encouragement to all his foes and to every place that rose in rebellion against him, as in the case of the revolt of Terracina, which following Gaeta's example, had now declared for the Byzantines. The Pope addressed bitter lamentations about this to the King, imploring him to come to his aid. Now, too, for the first time he officially alluded to Constantine's Donation to Pope Sylvester. However, in specifying what dominions were claimed for the Church, his demands were quite modest compared with the extent of territory indicated in the Act of Donation. For he only alluded to certain *patrimonies* of St. Peter in Tuscany, Spoleto, Benevento, Corsica, and the Sabine territory, all which patrimonies had been usurped by the Longobards, but belonged to the Church in virtue of former donations granted by emperors, exarchs, and others for the good of their souls, as could be proved by documents in his possession. Accordingly, it would seem that, apart from the Roman Duchy, Exarchates, and Pentapolis, his demands were limited, at least for the moment, to certain estates in various parts of the country. Hence, the "*Liber Pontificalis*" must have exaggerated the case in some way by the looseness of its wording, and have mistaken rights of ownership over certain tracts of land for rights of sovereignty over the provinces in which they were situated.

The Pope now applied to Charles, as to his legitimate sovereign, asking him to grant what in his opinion really

appertained to the Church and at the same time making protest against the calumnies hurled at him by his enemies, touching the corruption of the clergy, and also regarding the slave trade, which they accused him of favouring, whereas he had condemned and tried to abolish it. As an even more notable proof of the supremacy still attributed to the King by the Pope, we find the latter craving the royal permission to fell trees in the Spoleto forests, to provide the timber required for repairing the roof of St. Peter's Church. This affords satisfactory evidence that Adrian was very far from claiming to be the master of nearly all Central and Southern Italy, as alleged in the "*Liber Pontificalis*."

At the close of 780, Charles spent Christmas at Pavia with his wife Hildegard and his sons Carloman and Ludovic. Although on this occasion he came to Italy without an army, his visit led to important results, owing to the laws and chapters he then caused to be published in order to establish the government of the country on a settled basis. Certain of these laws, already proclaimed in France, now received sanction in Italy; while others were specifically planned for Italian use, and nearly all were to the advantage of the Church. Charles endowed the Church with the power of collecting tithes, augmented her revenues, tried to regulate the payment of canons due to her, to define the authority of metropolitan bishops, and to secure the proper administration of justice in the courts.

Naturally, all these measures were taken with the full agreement and approbation of the Pope, and when the King came to Rome for Easter (April 15, 781) he caused his son Carloman to be re-baptized by him and his name changed to that of Pippin. Accordingly from that time forth, Adrian always addressed Charles in his letters by the title of *compater noster*. On that same Easter Day, the Pope anointed Pippin as King of Italy, and Ludovic as King of Aquitaine, although merely as a matter of form

seeing that the elder boy was barely four and the other only two years of age.

These events undoubtedly enhanced in no small degree the authority of the Head of the Church, who now appeared increasingly disposed to assume the right of making and unmaking kingdoms. But, even in Italy, the real supremacy remained vested in King Charles, seeing that all the public documents of the realm were now issued by the Frankish Chancery and signed by Charles alone.

## CHAPTER VIII

IRENE RULES AT CONSTANTINOPLE—CHARLES INFLECTS  
FRESH DEFEATS ON THE SAXONS—ON RETURNING  
TO ITALY HE SUBJECTS FRIULI AND BENEVENTO—  
HE MAKES WAR ON THE AVARS—THEOLOGICAL  
DISPUTES—DEATH OF ADRIAN I. AND DESCRIPTION  
OF HIS CHARACTER

EVERYTHING now seemed to turn to Charles's advantage. In Byzantium, Constantine Copronymos had been succeeded by Leo IV., the Iconoclast, at whose death in 786 his widow, Irene, came to the throne, and was crowned together with her son, Constantine VI., a boy of only ten years. Irene was favourable to the worship of images, and feeling the need of establishing her position as empress, quickly declared her adherence to the Roman Church, and sent ambassadors to Charles proposing an alliance between her son Constantine and the King's eldest daughter Hrotrud, a child of eight. Thus there seemed reason to hope that, not only would there be peace between Constantinople and the Franks, but that no obstacle would be raised to the free possession granted to the Church of the Exarchate, Pentapolis and other territories, over which she could prove her legal rights. Only, at the very moment that a satisfactory arrangement seemed on the point of conclusion, Charles was obliged to set off in haste to resume his endless war with the Saxons, who had again risen in desperate revolt. He quickly defeated

and severely chastised them, for he is said to have condemned to death as many as 4,500 rebels in a single day. But, instead of reducing them to subjection, this drastic measure only roused a fiercer rebellion. In 783, the year in which he lost within a short space both his wife and his mother, he had to undertake another campaign against this stubborn tribe, and again won a great victory over them. Leaving the battlefield covered with heaps of slain, he went back to his kingdom laden with booty, and after his mother and his wife had been consigned to their graves, soon chose a new bride, named Fastrada. During the summer of 785 he again routed the Saxons in the field, and this time to some real effect. For the celebrated chief, Witikind, who had always been their leader, submitted to Charles and became a convert to Catholicism, an event that conduced to the subjection and conversion of the whole people. But in order to obtain this result Charles had been obliged to march eleven armies in succession to combat the proud tribe, and nine of these campaigns had been led by him in person.

Although Italian affairs had steadily improved during this period, and invariably to the advantage of the Papacy, owing to the manifest favour of those who ruled the Peninsula in the name of Pippin, but really under the supreme authority of King Charles, Adrian I. was still unsatisfied. He rejoiced in the triumphs of the King and the concession of the Saxons, but continually demanded the "just rights" (*giustizie*) of St. Peter with growing persistence, though never specifying the exact nature or amount of those rights; which indeed appeared to be steadily on the increase. Just now he was insisting more particularly on the cession of the Sabine patrimony which, so he alleged, had been always promised but never restored to him. All his letters, from 781 to 783, are full of complaints to that effect. The Pope concluded by stating that



the King had set inquiries on foot to investigate the real state of the matter ; but that after interrogating all the elders of every place, and after all obscurity had been cleared away, nothing more had been done. Adrian was addressing the same demands to the Empress Irene with regard to the lands which the Byzantines had taken from the Church in Calabria, Sicily, and elsewhere. And going on from one point to another, he even ended by proposing a pact of full agreement between the Eastern and Western Churches, "so that there might be no more risk of any fatal rupture, while always speaking of concord and friendship."

At any rate there was no quiet in Italy. The Pope was always complaining of being defrauded of his lands ; while Arichis, Duke of Benevento, who considered himself an independent sovereign, was always threatening his neighbours with a view to the extension of his own State. Accordingly, Charles returned to Italy, and after spending the Christmas of 786 at Florence, moved on towards Rome and advanced in the direction of Benevento. Arichis had flown to arms with the intention of making a stand at Salerno, where succour could easily reach him by sea, but soon came to terms with the King. The Duke made submission to the latter in the same manner in which his predecessors had made submission to the King of the Longobards. He also paid an indemnity, and gave his son Grimwald in hostage. Now, however, relations with Constantinople grew rather strained. In 787 the proposed marriage of Charles's daughter with the Empress's son was broken off, and the following year Constantine took an Armenian bride. Nevertheless, Charles had no time to think of the matter just then, for, after celebrating the Easter of 787 in Rome, he had to hurry back to Germany to war against the Duke of Bavaria, who was finally reduced to subjection that year.

Towards the close of 787 news suddenly came that Adelchis had effected a landing in Calabria. The Pope declared that he had come to the help of Duke Arichis, in order to reduce him to dependence on Constantinople, and then join with him in attacking Ravenna by sea. But whatever design may have been formed it came to nothing, for Arichis and his son Romwald speedily died, and left the government to the widowed Duchess Adalberga, a clever and resolute woman who openly sided with the Franks. First of all she requested King Charles to release her other son Grimwald, whom he still held in hostage. So the youth was restored to her, and at once assumed possession of the Duchy without paying any attention to the Pope, and regardless of the latter's perpetual demands for this or that territory and for the rights and *justices* due to St. Peter. Meanwhile, the Duke was preparing for war against the Byzantines in concert with King Charles, who was still detained in Germany, and had soon to take the field there against the Avars. When the empire of the Avars was destroyed in the days of Heraclius, the remnants of the nation had sought refuge in Pannonia, and now made their final appearance on the stage by pushing down into Friuli for a while.

In 788, Byzantine troops were disembarked on the southern coast of Italy for the purpose of reinforcing Adelchis; so Grimwald of Benevento and his men, and Hildebrand of Spoleto with his followers, and also a small Frankish force sent by Charles, promptly marched against them. The Byzantines were driven back to Sicily; Adelchis withdrew and was never heard of again. All these events helped to raise King Charles's power and prestige in Italy to an extraordinary pitch. But he retained the utmost deference for the Pope in all matters whether great or small. He even appealed to him—almost

as though Adrian were supreme in the Exarchate—for permission to export a few marbles and mosaics from Ravenna for the decoration of some buildings he wished to erect in Aachen and elsewhere.

There seemed to be no limit to the King's marvellous energy; at every moment he was called to face new perils, and promptly surmounted them. In 791, he waged war against the Avars in Germany and Friuli. In 792, he was forced to repress a conspiracy hatched by his natural son Pippin, nicknamed "the Hunchback," who had rebelled in consequence of being excluded from the succession, in favour, as he seemed to think, of the legitimate heir, whose name, as we have seen, had been recently changed to that of Pippin. However, the Hunchback was soon worsted and confined in a monastery. Even Spoleto and Benevento gave a great deal of trouble by their perpetual attempts at rebellion.

A certain incident recorded in a document dated 824 must have occurred in 792, exactly at the time when the Avars were threatening Friuli with invasion. To provide for the defence of Verona it was indispensable to repair the walls, and this led to a hot dispute between the bishop and the citizens, who tried to make him pay one-third of the cost, whereas he maintained that his share should be only one-fourth of the amount. Accordingly, a sort of trial by ordeal was arranged, which resulted in favour of the bishop. Some writers have tried to deduce from this that even as early as the year 792 there was already a commencement of autonomous government in some of the Longobard cities. But the authenticity of the documentary record is extremely doubtful, and there is also some probability that it really referred to events of a later date.

While pursuing his task of promulgating laws and consolidating the government, Charles gave continued

attention to the organisation of the Church, and likewise to the settlement of religious questions. In 794, he convoked a Synod at Frankfort and took an active part in discussing points of dogma. At one of the sittings he condemned the so-called Adoptionist heresy, imported from Spain, which admitted the dual nature of Jesus, declaring that as the Word He was truly the Son of God, but that as Man He was only Son of the Father by grace and adoption. The second question discussed by the Synod was of a different kind, but roused no less heat. The seventh Œcumenical Council of Nicæa (787), in sanctioning the worship of images, had admitted that prayer might be offered to the images of saints, as well as to the Cross, and that tapers and incense might be burnt before them. All this might appear simple enough in the East, where it was customary to burn incense and place lighted candles even in front of the Emperor's portrait, but things were different in the West. The matter became still more serious when, in translating the decrees of the Council at Pope Adrian's command, the words *to honour* the saints were rendered by the very different verb *to adore*. So, rightly enough, after opposing Adoptionism, the King also opposed the pretension of offering the same adoration (*latria*) to the Saints that was only owed to the Trinity. This, however, was merely fighting windmills, inasmuch as the question at Nicæa touched on *honouring*, not on *adoring* the Saints. Accordingly, the Pope, without consenting to condemn (which indeed would have been impossible for him) the recent decrees of the Nicene Council, refrained from giving them his approval. And this, not only on account of the strange manner in which they were formulated, but also by way of expressing his dissatisfaction with Constantinople, where no willingness was shown to restore the territories which he alleged to have

been robbed from the Church in Southern Italy. He seemed pleased on the whole with the results achieved at Frankfort.

On the 10th of August of the same year (794) King Charles was bereaved of his wife Fastrada, and immediately after her death was again compelled to resume the Saxon war, which was vigorously prosecuted in 795.

Pope Adrian I. died on Christmas Day (795). Many important events had occurred during his reign, though they were not invariably owed to his initiative. It is true that he summoned King Charles to Italy, and that Charles destroyed the Longobard rule and started the temporal power of the Papacy; but all this seemed rather the result of circumstances than of any personal effort on the part of the Pope. In his correspondence with the King he always referred to Constantine, "who had made the great Donation, because it was unjust that an earthly emperor should hold sway in the land wherein the heavenly Emperor had established his priestly principality." He was so jealous of his own authority that he expostulated with the King for giving audience to certain inhabitants of the Pentapolis who had gone to seek him without first obtaining the Papal authorisation. "Even as the Franks," he remarked, "never come to Rome without the King's consent, so those men had no right to go to France without the consent of the Pope. For, even as the latter respects the Patriciate of the King, so should the King respect that of St. Peter." Neither would he admit Charles's right to interfere with the affairs of Ravenna, seeing that the Exarchate and the Pentapolis now belonged to St. Peter. But these views were more or less theoretical, since Charles was the real master. In fact, Adrian was enabled to escape many dangers by recognising the true state of things and prudently submitting to necessity, in spite of continually



protesting and making reservations in order to keep intact the rights of the Church. His successor, who was of more uncompromising temper and had rather less respect for appearances, was soon brought, as we shall see, to sad straits.

## CHAPTER IX

ELECTION OF LEO III.—A FRANKISH EMBASSY TO ROME—  
—THE EMPRESS IRENE—THE POPE AT PADERBORN  
—HIS RETURN TO ROME—CHARLES COMES TO ROME  
AND ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 800, IS CROWNED  
EMPEROR BY THE POPE

LEO III. was elected Pope the day after Adrian's death and received consecration on the 27th of December, 795. In 772, his predecessor still dated his pontifical bulls reckoning from the number of years the Emperor had held sway, but after King Charles became over-lord of Italy, began to count them from the years of his own reign, although still acknowledging the Emperor's supremacy. But Leo III. at once dated his bulls according to the years Charles had reigned as King of the Franks and the Longobards and as Patrician of Rome, after his conquest of Italy. Thus the bond was snapped between the Church and Constantinople, from which the new Pope virtually asserted his independence. Leo's first act was to announce his predecessor's death and his own election to Charles, forwarding at the same time the golden keys of St. Peter and the banner of the city of Rome as a token that he unhesitatingly recognised the monarch's supremacy as Patrician. He likewise invited him to despatch envoys to Rome to receive the people's oath of allegiance.

The ideas of Leo III. regarding the new state of affairs are clearly indicated in the celebrated mosaic he caused to be placed in the triclinium of the Lateran. It has now disappeared, but a reproduction made in 1743 from an old drawing is still to be seen on the outer wall of the "Scala Santa" in the Piazza of the Gate of St. John Lateran, near the Basilica. The figures in this mosaic seem to direct their gaze across the Campagna to the olive groves of Tivoli and beyond them, to the Sabine and Umbrian peaks whose delicate tints are often hidden in winter beneath a veil of snow. The mosaic is divided into three compartments. The central and larger one is filled by the majestic form of the Redeemer surrounded by the apostles, whom He is sending forth to proclaim His gospel to the world. One hand is extended in the act of benediction, the other clasps a book inscribed with the words *Pax vobis*. In the compartment to the right, Christ is seated between Pope Sylvester and the Emperor Constantine, who are depicted as much smaller figures kneeling on either side. The left division contains a great figure of St. Peter with the keys in his lap, flanked by the kneeling forms of Leo III. and King Charles, also of lesser size. St. Peter is presenting a stole to the Pope and the banner of Rome to the King. The legend beneath runs: "*Beate Petre donas vita Leoni P.P. et bictoria Carulo Regio donas.*"

In response to the embassy from Rome, Charles sent ambassadors of his own there, headed by the Abbot Angilbert, who was surnamed Homer on account of his great learning and love of poetry. His instructions were very simple. He was to remind the Pope of the necessity of "observing a holy life and enforcing respect of holy rules." The King likewise wrote to Adrian himself, stating "that Angilbert comes to confer with you on all measures you may deem necessary for the glory of God

and Holy Church, and for the maintenance of your honour and our Patriciate. We wish to conclude the same terms of alliance with you as were previously concluded with your predecessor, and crave your blessing. It behoveth us, with God's help, to defend the Church abroad by force of arms against all pagans and infidels, and protect her at home by the maintenance of the Catholic faith. It behoveth you, holy father, to assist our soldiers, by raising, like Moses, your hands to heaven, so that the Christian people may prevail over the enemies of Christ." This shows that Charles not only assumed the attitude of protector of the Pope, but also that of champion of the true faith. His warning as to the duty of leading a holy life, proves that intelligence had reached him of the numerous and weighty accusations launched in Rome against the Pope by his enemies and slanderers.

Meanwhile all things continued to prosper with the King, and his own courage and that of his followers mounted with the tide of good fortune. His learned adviser, Alcuin, continually reminded him that he was appointed by God not only to be the mightiest sovereign in the world, but also the defender of the true faith. Now, there was nothing to be feared from the Empire of the East, which had sunk to so low a depth that no man could speak of it without blushing. No danger, no opposition to the preponderating power of Charles could be threatened from the East. Irene had begun to reign in association with her son Constantine VI., not only keeping him in humiliating subjection, but actually flogging him. At last he threw off the yoke, excluding his mother from the government and placing her in confinement. But he was so weak, dissolute, capricious, and violent, that in 797 a revolution broke out and Irene was restored to the throne. Thereupon she not only deposed her son but treated him with savage cruelty, and had his eyes plucked out in the

hope of causing his death. As a matter of fact he lingered in captivity for many years neglected by all. Accordingly, for the first time in history, a woman reigned in the East, a novelty that appeared all the more enormous seeing that this woman was known to be a monster by the atrocities she had perpetrated on her own son.

Matters went little better in Rome, where the weakness of the Empire and the absence of King Charles again caused an outbreak of savage party passion. The *judices de clero*, and the *judices de militia* who had held command of the city for some time, rose in revolt. As we already know, the ecclesiastical judges were wealthy prelates, friends or kinsmen of the Popes. From their midst were chosen the seven ministers of the Curia who managed the property of the Church, and their chief was the *Primicerius*, who in all public ceremonies ranked next to the Pope.

Under Adrian I. this office was held by his uncle, Theodatus, who also received the title of *Consul et Dux*, and thus his noble and already powerful house acquired enormous influence in Rome. Two nephews of the Pope, Theodorus and Paschal, had also attained to high power, and the second of the two succeeded Theodatus as Primicerius, and still held that office after Adrian's death, since it was not usual to appoint a new one when a fresh Pope was elected. Hence Paschal, having grown accustomed to playing the master, clashed with Leo III., and naturally detested him. He and Campulus, the *Sacellarius*, or Keeper of the Privy Purse (probably another nephew of the late Pontiff), placed themselves at the head of the *judices de clero* and of the *judices de militia*, who constituted the secular aristocracy, and had command of the army, and made a combined attempt to get the entire government of the city into their own hands.

On the 25th of April, 779, the Feast of St. Mark, when a grand procession was to parade the city singing pious



Litanies, Leo III., with Paschal and Campulus in attendance, and followed by a train of priests, came riding through the street that leads from St. John Lateran to St. Laurence in Lucina. They had barely reached St. Sylvester in Capite when the conspirators rushed forward, sword in hand, and falling on the Pope, stabbed him and dragged him from the saddle. Then in the barbarous Byzantine way, they attempted to blind him and pluck out his tongue, leaving him half dead on the ground. Paschal and Campulus, who were privy to the crime, then openly sided with the assassins, first imprisoning the Pope in the neighbouring convent, and then, for greater safety, removing him to St. Erasmus on the Cœlian Hill. Legend declares that he miraculously recovered his eyes and tongue there, but history states that he had never been deprived of them. The conspirators did not venture to elect a new Pope, especially as their plot had not been aimed at the Head of the Church but against the Lord of the City. As Leo III. was soon healed of his wounds, some of his familiars, including the Chamberlain Albinus, contrived his escape by letting him down with ropes from the monastery wall and conveyed him to St. Peter's. There Guinigild, Duke of Spoleto, and his troops, together with an envoy from King Charles, came to his rescue and escorted him to Spoleto. An embassy was quickly dispatched to France to inform the King of what had happened, and state that the Pope desired an interview with him. Charles replied that he would have hastened to the Pope at once were he not prevented by another campaign against the Saxons. He would therefore receive the Pope at Paderborn, and would send Archbishop Hildibald of Cologne, Count Ascarius, and his own son, Pippin, King of Italy, to meet him on the road and escort him in all safety and honour to his presence. So the Pope made a triumphal journey with a numerous

retinue of prelates. The Archbishop was the first to meet him on the road, and then Pippin appeared with a portion of his army and conducted him to Paderborn, where Charles welcomed him in state at the head of his troops, who all knelt to receive the Papal benediction. The King then held great festivities in his honour, and also made him generous donations.

Meanwhile Rome was in full revolt, and the gravest accusations against the Pope were continually forwarded to Charles, praying him to bring Leo to trial, since the crimes attributed to that Pontiff were of so serious a nature that, unless proved innocent, he certainly ought to be deposed. In fact, things looked so ugly, that although absorbed in the business of the war, Charles deemed it necessary to consult his trusty Alcuin as to the advisability of continuing the campaign in person or of going straightforth to Rome in order to put an end to the dangerous disturbances which were still raging there. Alcuin then wrote a very remarkable letter to the King, in which he said : "Down to this time there have been three powers in the world, the Vicar of St. Peter, now impiously insulted and maltreated ; the secular Emperor and ruler of new Rome, who, in equally barbarous fashion, has been dragged from the throne to give place to a woman ; and finally the royal dignity entrusted to yourself by Jesus Christ for the rule of the Christian people. This dignity surpasses all others in wisdom and power ; therefore, the salvation of Christianity depends on you alone. Your first thought should be to cure the Head (*i.e.*, *Rome*), your second to apply remedies to the feet (*i.e.*, *the Saxons and other foes*), whose ills are always less perilous."

Accordingly, on finding that both the Pope and the Romans invoked the exercise of his supreme authority, the King realised the gravity of the situation, and felt

anxious to go to Italy at once. But being unable to leave Paderborn for the present, he allowed Leo III. to start in the company of the Archbishops of Cologne and Salzburg, five bishops and three counts, all of whom were sent, not only to do honour to the Pope, but also for the purpose of undertaking a judicial inquiry regarding all that had happened in Rome, and all the charges brought against Leo III. Meanwhile, as the Head of the Church, and under the protection of the King, and also because a reaction in his favour had already begun, the Pope everywhere received a triumphal welcome. On the 29th of November, 799, he reached Pontemolle, and was met there by the clergy, the nuns, the Senate (that is, the nobility), the Roman army and Roman people, and the foreign scholars, all singing Psalms and bearing banners in their hands. Moving on to St. Peter's, Leo pronounced a blessing on the people and administered the holy sacrament. The following morning he went to the Lateran, and there, a few days later, the royal commissioners opened the trial in the new Triclinum decorated with the great mosaic picture mentioned in a previous page. Paschal, Campulus, and their companions appeared before the tribunal with tranquil assurance; but being unable to prove the truth of the charges they had made, while there was the fullest proof of the bloodthirsty violence of their attack on the Pope, they were seized and sent to Gaul to await their trial before the supreme court of King Charles, who had to defer judgment until he should be able to return to Italy.

He was detained some time longer by wars with the Saxons, the Bretons, and the Moors in Spain. In addition to all these cares, his third and last legitimate wife, Liutgarda, was taken from him by death, on the 4th of June, 800. But in the autumn of 800 he finally made his fourth and most memorable visit to Italy. He

came at the head of an army and accompanied by his son Pippin, whom he sent on from Ancona to attack the Duke of Benevento, who was again threatening revolt. On the 23rd of November he halted at Mentana, fourteen miles distance from Rome, and was met there by Leo III., the clergy, army, and people of Rome. They conferred together and dined, after which the Pope returned to the city. The following day Charles entered St. Peter's in state and was received there by the Pope and the clergy.

On the 1st of December, the King, attended by his bishops, abbots, and barons, took his seat as supreme judge in St. Peter's, where he had convened a great assembly of both the aristocracies and of the priesthood of Rome. Charles was attired in the toga and chlamys of the Patrician of Rome, the Pope was enthroned beside him, and the latter's accusers, who had been brought back from France, were also present. The King then made a speech, saying that he had now come to Rome as Patrician and Defender of the Church, in order to restore public order after the disturbances which had taken place there and the insults and accusations hurled at the Head of the Christian world. The supremacy of Charles was recognised by all ; nevertheless it was very difficult to bring this trial to a conclusion. For although it was impossible to prove the truth of the charges against the Pope, neither was it easy to establish their falsity. Besides, the bishops unanimously declared that it was altogether unlawful for them to sit in judgment on the supreme Head of the Church, who was, on the contrary, bound to judge them. The details of the trial are unknown to us ; we are also unacquainted with the exact nature of the charges alleged. But we know that on the 23rd of December, in the presence of King Charles and his Franks, before all the bishops and clergy, the nobles and citizens of Rome solemnly assembled in St. Peter's, the

Pope, having mounted the pulpit and placed his hand on the Gospels, proclaimed in clear, distinct tones that, following the example of his predecessors (among whom, in fact, he might have cited that of Pelagius, who was accused of complicity in the death of Pope Vigilius)—he, of his own free-will—since no one had power to judge him—affirmed on oath his total innocence of all the crimes laid to his charge. Then the priests chanted hymns of thanksgiving to God and the Virgin Mother. Doubtless Leo was induced to make this public assertion of innocence because it was deemed fitting by the King, whose aid was indispensable for the maintenance of his rule. But his authority was saved with the Church and the people. Paschal, Campulus, and their accomplices were condemned to death, but through the intercession, it was said, of the Pope himself, their sentence was commuted to perpetual banishment in France. On the same day, two representatives of the Patriarch of Jerusalem arrived in Rome and presented Charles with the keys of their city and of the Holy Sepulchre. On Christmas Day, the King attended the Pope's High Mass at St. Peter's, and afterwards prayed with him in the Tomb of the Saint. Then, when Charles rose from his knees, Leo suddenly placed the Imperial crown on his head, and, so it is said, then knelt at his feet in act of adoration. Thereupon, the Roman people acclaimed him Emperor, frantically shouting: "*Carolo piissimo augusto a Deo coronato, magno pacifico Imperatori vita et victoria.*" This coronation opened a new epoch in the history of the world.

The annalist, Einhard, states that it was unexpectedly and spontaneously performed by the Pope, that Charles was taken altogether by surprise, and actually protested that had he foreseen this, he would have refrained from attending the great function at St. Peter's that day. There has been much dispute as to the truth of this assertion. Some



regarded it as a mere invention on the part of the chronicler, others as a fiction on the part of the King in imitation of Tiberius, who feigned to refuse the Empire he so ardently wished to possess. These writers maintain that every detail of the Imperial coronation had been previously arranged while the Pope was at Paderborn, and that it could have been in nowise an unexpected or spontaneous act. At any rate, the crown must have been ordered and made ready beforehand and the solemnity of the function previously arranged, seeing that it was no surprise to the assembled crowd, who understood it at once and burst into noisy and unanimous shouts of applause.

History is rich in analogous instances, serving to show that it is possible to explain the King's utterances without assigning to them any falsity or deceit. Persigny relates in his *Memoirs* how he "rushed" the proclamation of the Empire almost by force, and against the will of Napoleon III., although the latter had long aspired and struggled to win it. But he did not think the right moment had arrived, whereas Persigny was sure it had come and refused to let it pass. Hence, it may well be that Charles, although undoubtedly coveting the Empire, would have preferred to smooth the way more completely for the proclamation of his new title, and settle all details of the rite in advance; while the Pope, for the express purpose of avoiding acceptance of some unwelcome formula or condition, hastened to clinch the matter by completing the deed. It was of supreme importance to himself that the coronation and proclamation of the Empire should appear to be directly owed to the visible Head of the Church, as the instrument of heaven, and be acclaimed by the Roman people, who represented the universal flock of Christ. Leo III. was resolved to be the initiator and creator of the new Empire, so that all might accrue to the good of religion and to

the ever greater enhancement of the authority of Holy Church.

Naturally, this great event was widely discussed and gave rise to numerous suppositions. According to some writers, Charles was proclaimed Emperor by the Senate and people of Rome ; according to others, he was elected and anointed by the Pope ; while others again averred that he obtained the Empire by conquest. But it was always recognised that the primary cause was the will of God, of whom mankind is the blind instrument. The truth is that the Empire was the result of no theory, but the unavoidable evolution of historic necessity. The Church stood in need of protection and defence ; therefore the Pope had summoned the Franks, and therefore, of his own will and with his own hands, had crowned King Charles in the name of the Lord. After crowning him, however, he had knelt before him. Who, then, was the superior, Emperor or Pope ? This question the future alone could decide. For the moment, the Pope had created the Empire whose protection he required. Having separated from Constantinople the Church dwelt in the new Empire ruled by Charles, to whom posterity gave the title of Charles the Great. From that moment, in fact, Charles was the only true ruler, as being the only man with strength to rule.

But an Empire being universal in its nature, there could be only one Empire, that of the East, with Constantinople as its seat. That which was formerly known as the Western Empire was merely an ephemeral episode and already long past and forgotten. In fact, three centuries had elapsed since the ambassadors of Odovacar and Augustulus had placed the Imperial insignia in Zeno's hands, declaring to him that the West needed no Emperor of its own, that the Emperor of the East sufficed for all, and that Italy, the ancient seat of Empire,

was still an integral part of his realm. Accordingly the new Frankish Empire, although the outcome of an historic necessity, had no lawful basis. Perhaps it was also on this score that Charles wished to observe caution as to the moment and manner of his proclamation. Nevertheless, Leo III. had chosen a highly opportune moment. The King of the Franks had then conquered all his foes, and strongly consolidated and enlarged his own realm. The Pope had been pronounced innocent and had remounted St. Peter's Chair, armed with greater authority than before. The day of the Coronation was a holy day to all as the anniversary of our Lord's birth, and, accordingly, of the redemption of mankind. The throne of Constantinople was occupied, as we know, by a woman, and the woman was a monster whom none could respect. Nevertheless, the great event that was now accomplished was pregnant with doubts and dangers, of which the sad consequences were soon to be felt. For the moment, however, the moral power of the Pope was immensely enhanced.

After a residence of five months in Rome, and after celebrating Easter there in April, 801, and delegating to Pippin the task of continuing the campaign against Benevento, Charles went back to Pavia. There he issued a few other laws, supplementary to the Longobard Code, and assumed the title of "The Most Serene Augustus, by divine will crowned ruler of the Roman Empire, and, by grace of God, King of the Franks and the Longobards." He allowed North Italy to retain its autonomy, without annexing that country to the Frankish realm, and rather regarding it as a personal conquest of his own. Doing away with the Dukes, he replaced them by Longobard Counts of his own choice since, as we have already explained, these Counts were less powerful and more submissive than Dukes and ruled smaller territories. The

unity and strength of the government and the fusion of conquerors and conquered then progressed with great strides. The Gastalds, whose original functions were no longer required, now changed into mere agents in the dependence of the Counts, who administered justice only as delegates of the sovereign, and not, like the Dukes, in their own right. The right of calling out the national militia (*heriban*) was reserved to the Emperor alone, who restricted the power of the Dukes to even narrower limits by means of the so-called *Missi dominici* (or high commissioners), who became a royal institution of primary importance among the Franks and by whose means the Emperor was able to keep an eye on the whole scheme of administration. In holding courts of justice Charles decided cases like a true sovereign, and even on a basis of equity where law failed to touch the point at issue. The Longobard Dukes were allowed some power of deciding in this fashion, but it was never conceded to the Frankish Counts.

Charles also gave attention to legal procedure, which among the barbarians long bore traces of its primitive origin. At first every man did justice for himself; next, justice was administered by the people; then, later on, by the Sovereign, representing the State. During the Middle Ages a mixed system prevailed. The people co-operated with the King in the administration of justice, for the King held solemn courts of justice, surrounded by his grandees and his Palatine judges, in the presence of popular assemblies called *placita*, the presidency of which might be delegated, if necessary, to the Counts. The sovereign or his acting delegate was assisted by magistrates, who directed these general assemblies and were thoroughly conversant with the usages to be observed. By slow degrees the people abandoned the practice of regularly attending the *placita*, and then

the written laws which were added to or substituted for the old customs were less easy of interpretation. Accordingly, it became necessary to appoint temporary magistrates skilled in the law and capable of pronouncing verdicts. Charles converted magistrates of this description into permanent officials styled *Scabini*. They were elected by the *placita*, in the presence of the Count, and the *Missi dominici* confirmed their appointment if they considered them suited to the work.

The general organisation of the Frankish government and society was very different from that of the Longobards, and particularly in its greater centralisation and in the wider political, military, and judicial authority of the sovereign. The Franks recognised no distinction between the patrimony of the State and that of the King. *Curtis regia*, *Palatinum publicum*, *Res publica*, seemed to them one and the same thing. State domains, as well as those reverting to the State in the absence of heirs, were alike included in the royal patrimony. The King entrusted the administration of the whole to officers of his own, who enjoyed none of the independence of the Longobard Gastalds; for everywhere and always Charles's strong individuality seemed to augment both his material and moral authority.

This monarch's incessant and feverish activity was shown in a thousand different ways. He was a tall, robust man of handsome presence, with brilliantly flashing eyes. He was valiant, resourceful, and untiring, was not only a captain and statesman of the highest class, but, like most great sovereigns, an energetic promoter of public works. In 793 we find him engaged in studying a scheme for cutting a canal to connect the Rhine with the Danube, a gigantic enterprise quite beyond the engineering skill of his period and that was to be only carried out in our own times. But he made many canals, roads, and



bridges, including an immense bridge spanning the Rhine at Mainz. He also erected numerous churches, the most famous of which is the Cathedral of Aachen, on the pattern of St. Vitale at Ravenna, where travellers come in shoals to see the treasury, sacred relics, and memorials of its great founder. Most of the other churches built by him have ceased to exist, and in spite of his praiseworthy efforts, even Charles lacked the power to arrest the decay of architecture. As another proof of his remarkable intellect and varied activity it should be noted that, while having so little culture that he only learnt to read late in life and could scarcely write at all, and although essentially Germanic in temperament and taste, he was nevertheless a most earnest patron of classic scholarship. During every brief respite from the anxieties of war we find him simultaneously acting as legislator, supreme judge, creator of public works, and generous protector of learning. He loved to surround himself with scholars and appreciated the full importance of all the acquirements he lacked.

One of the men of learning at his Court was Paulus Diaconus, the historian of the Longobard race, who was a man of varied attainments, knew the Greek language, and wrote several works in prose and verse. He had been dear to Ratchis and Desiderius, first frequented the Court of Pavia, and afterwards that of Benevento; he witnessed the overthrow of the Longobard kingdom, and became a monk in the Benedictine Monastery of Monte Cassino. His family must have been implicated in the plots against Charles, since, as already related, one of his brothers was kept in strict confinement by the King. Thereupon, knowing that the Emperor had a great esteem for learned men, Paulus ventured to write to him and plead his brother's cause. Afterwards he repaired to the Court in person, was made very welcome there, and his petition

was probably granted, seeing that he remained in attendance during the years 783-86. Then, home-sickness drove him back to the distant south, and again withdrawing to Monte Cassino, he there wrote his history of the Longobards.

With the aid of other learned men, either visitors to France or natives of the land, Charles was enabled to provide his kingdom with many schools, and the principal one was usually established in his own palace at Aachen, and often formed part of his Court during his travels. This special school was under the direction of Alcuin, a man of English birth and trained at York, the great centre of culture that had been transferred from Ireland to Britain. There the young Englishman became thoroughly versed in the Latin philosophy and learning he so warmly admired. Charles made his acquaintance in Italy and immediately invited him to France. So Alcuin went over there with a few companions and was the creator and superintendent of a great school or academy, of which the King and his sons often attended the meetings. The *Trivium* *Quadrivium*<sup>1</sup> and Theology were all taught there; and the principal members of the academy assumed Greek, Roman, or Biblical names. King Charles was David, Alcuin was Flaccus, his associate Angilbert was Homer, and so on. Alcuin was the director of this school from 782 to 796, and it greatly promoted the diffusion of culture not only in the Frankish dominions but throughout the whole of Europe. Together with other generous rewards to his learned and trusted adviser, the King presented Alcuin with the richly endowed Abbey of St. Martin,

<sup>1</sup> For the benefit of the general reader, it may be explained that *trivium* and *quadrivium* denote the ancient manner of dividing the sciences into two groups. The *Trivium* comprised grammar (or philology), logic, and rhetoric; the *Quadrivium*, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. St. Augustine is supposed to have originated this method of division.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

whither he finally withdrew and wrote many of his works. Many other scholars were likewise guests at Charles's Court. There was Einhart, the Austrasian noble (770-844), who also received fat abbey from the sovereign, and, besides writing his life ("Vita Caroli") was the author of annals full of precious details of contemporary events. There was the Neustrian noble, Angilbert, who, when already the father of a family, entered the Church and became the author of several poems and historical writings. Many other aristocrats were induced by the King to devote themselves to letters and were the founders of schools in Cathedral cities. In addition to literature this grand sovereign eagerly promoted every other branch of culture; including the development of instrumental and vocal music. He gave his attention to the revision and diffusion of manuscript copies of the Bible and also aided the diffusion of patriotic works. Even the art of calligraphy was improved in his reign, and the new form of writing, called Carolingian, was adopted.

The constitution of the Frankish Empire was the chief and central achievement of the Middle Ages. For a time it welded many very different countries and peoples into a firmly united whole, assisted the fusion of conquered and conquerors, of Roman and Teuton, of the Germanic spirit with the spirit of Greek and Roman culture; while—provisionally, at least—it promoted the harmony of the State with the Church, to which Charles was so munificent. He was constantly labouring to protect the Church and to improve its organisation, while often asserting also his right of guarding the purity of the faith. Everywhere, save in Italy, the bishops were appointed by Charles, and he always tried to keep them on good terms with one another, with the Pope and with the Counts, by means of his commissioners, the *Missi dominici*, who, being entrusted with the supervision both of justice and religion, always consisted of one layman and one ecclesiastic.

But this great organic entity, the Empire, albeit the necessary result of historic evolution, was likewise the personal achievement of one man's genius ; so partially, at least, it ended with his life. In fact, after the death of Charles, his heirs, like the Franks of earlier days, were soon at strife among themselves. Owing to the vastness of the Empire and the great diversity of its composite elements, civil war raged even more fiercely than before. A new state of society had been formed, in which the distinctive national feeling of every separate race began to react with irresistible force, thus shattering the temporary union created by the military and political genius of Charles the Great. The Empire in Italy only reached to the edge of the Garigliano, that being the limit of its actual conquests. As the Duke of Benevento contrived to retain his independence, the Longobard order of things survived for some time longer within his dominions. From this moment, in short, the history of Southern Italy begins to be entirely distinct and very different from that of the rest of the Peninsula. Besides, Church and State, Pope and Emperor were soon plunged in bitterly violent quarrels which increasingly enfeebled the new state of society erected by the Frankish Empire, so that, owing to the establishment of feudalism, it was broken up into a congeries of petty groups. But from the very bosom of feudalism and in total opposition to it, our Italian Communes were destined to arise and leap to prosperity—destined to be the first-fruits of the fusion of two different races and societies that the Empire had promoted—and to become the first initiators of modern civilisation. Nevertheless, before the Communes could take shape, both Italy and all Europe had to endure another period of dire trouble, disorder, and almost of anarchy.

FINIS.





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